

OPINION 6

PANDORA'S BOX
OF CORRUPTION

WORLD 8

'6 RUSSIAN MILITARY OFFICERS
SACKED SINCE WAR BEGAN'

MONEY 10

INDIA'S OUTBOUND TOURISM TO
SURPASS \$42 BN BY 2024: REPORT

NEW DELHI, MONDAY AUGUST 8, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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12 SPORT

'Indian federal structure became model for world'

We showed it's possible to overcome challenges, PM tells Niti meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that India's federal structure and cooperative federalism emerged as "a model for the world during the Covid crisis" and the country had sent a "powerful message" to the developing nations — that it is possible to overcome challenges with resilience, despite resource limitations.

Chairing the seventh Governing Council meeting of the Niti Aayog at Rashtrapati Bhavan's Cultural Centre in the national Capital, the Prime Minister gave credit to States for delivering on the ground saying "every State played a crucial role according to its strength and contributed to India's fight against Covid."

"This led to India emerging as an example for the developing nations to look up to as a global leader."

The agenda of the Niti Aayog meeting included crop diversification and achieving self-sufficiency in oilseeds and pulses and agri-communities, implementation of the National Education Policy-school education, implementation of the National Education Policy-higher education, and urban governance.

This was the first physical meeting of the Governing Council since the onset of the pandemic. The 2021 meeting was held via video conferencing.

The meeting was attended by 23 Chief Ministers, three Lieutenant-Governors and two Administrators.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Ministers and Chief Ministers of States/UTs at the 7th Governing Council meeting of the Niti Aayog at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

Opp makes slew of demands

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From urging the Centre to increase the share of States in the central taxes and duties, to the allocation of funds for disaster management to MSP for farmers, Opposition Chief Ministers on Sunday made a slew of demands in the 7th Governing Council Meeting of the Niti Aayog, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Non-BJP ruled States, such as Chhattisgarh, Kerala, and Rajasthan have in the past also demanded that the compensation regime be extended by five years. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee emphasised that the Centre should look into the demands of the State Governments "more seriously" and no policies should be forced on them.

Banerjee stressed that there

should be a "greater cooperation" between the Centre and the States. The Trinamool Congress supremo also said that State Governments should not be pressurised to implement the NEP. She left the meeting midway citing the cyclone situation in Kolkata.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel reiterated his demand to the Centre seeking a five-year extension for the compensation paid to States for revenue shortfall due to GST implementation and called for revising the rates of royalty for coal and other major minerals from the State. On the occasion the Chief Minister noted that the Niti Aayog has appreciated the better performance of the aspirational districts of the State in the last three-and-a-half years. He, however, added that there are still resource problems in the

State, which should be resolved.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann informed the media that he raised the issues of farmers including Minimum Support Price (MSP) while adding that he was happy with the meeting.

"It was the first for me after becoming the Chief Minister. It is unfortunate that no one has come from Punjab in the last three years. I went with detailed homework today and tabled Punjab's issues. The biggest issue was of the variety of crops," Mann said. He added he was satisfied with the Niti Aayog's meeting as all issues were listened to. Delhi CM and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal could not attend the meeting as he is in Gujarat. Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy boycotted the meeting.

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Golden and silver shower for India on Super Sunday

Eldhose Paul wins first triple long jump gold in CWG

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

It was a Super Sunday for India as it saw a huge haul of gold, silver and bronze medals at the Commonwealth Games. Eldhose Paul won a historic triple jump gold in a 1-2 finish for India as the country bagged four medals on the concluding day of athletics competitions at the Commonwealth Games here. After the mad rush of four medals coming within 30 minutes, India's medal tally from athletics swelled to eight — 1 gold, 4 silver, 3 bronze — the best in CWG history outside the country and only second to the haul at the 2010 edition in Delhi.

The 25-year-old Paul became only the sixth Indian to win a CWG gold since legendary Milkha Singh won it in 1958 in 440 yards. The Ernakulam-born Indian Navyman led India's historic 1-2 finish with a best jump of 17.03m in his third attempt after opening with 14.62m. His jump was though wind-assisted and his second best was 16.63m. Before Sunday's jump, he had a personal best of 16.99m. Paul's historic 1-2 finish in men's triple jump at the Commonwealth Games was followed by fellow Kerala athlete Abdulla Aboobacker here on Sunday as he finished at 17.02m, which he managed in his fifth attempt.

Meanwhile, in boxing, the indomitable Nikhat Zareen added a Commonwealth Games light flyweight (50kg) title to her bulging trophy cabinet while Amit Panghal (51kg) began his redemption journey with a much-needed gold winning show. Nikhat, who is on a winning spree since the Nationals last year, asserted her dominance over Northern Ireland's Carly Mc Naul as she punched her way to a comprehensive 5-0 win in her maiden CWG appearance.

Panghal, on the other hand, avenged his 2018 Commonwealth Games final loss against Kieran MacDonald by clinching the title with a comprehensive 5-0 win over the favourite. Indian boxers made it three out of three golds on the day as young Nitu Ghanghas (48kg) too reigned supreme on her CWG debut. Sagar Ahlawat will play his final bout later on Sunday night.

The India pugilists will return with seven medals from Birmingham, two less than the previous edition.

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Boxer Nikhat Zareen with the gold medal after winning the final of 48kg-50kg (Light Flyweight) boxing match, at the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham, UK on Sunday. PTI

Women win hockey medal after 16 yrs

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Skipper Savita Punia led from the front with a spectacular display as the Indian women's hockey team overcame the stop-watch controversy to beat New Zealand 2-1 in shootout and win the bronze medal at the

Commonwealth Games here on Sunday.

This is the team's first medal at the CWG in 16 years. Leading 1-0, India conceded a penalty corner with less than 30 seconds to go for the final hooter, as the match went into shootout after Olivia Merry's equaliser. In the

regulation time, India got the lead through Salima Tete in the 29th minute.

Coming off their heartbreaking loss to Australia in a controversial semi-final, India showed the intent to wrap up their campaign with a win and earn a podium finish.



Indian players Vandana Katariya, Lalremsemi and Sangita Kumari celebrate their win over New Zealand in the women's hockey bronze medal match at the Commonwealth Games 2022, in Birmingham on Sunday. PTI

China seeks meeting as Lanka relents to Indian pressure

PTI ■ COLOMBO

China's embassy here has sought an urgent meeting with senior Sri Lankan authorities after Colombo sought a deferment of the planned docking of a high-tech Chinese research vessel at the strategic Hambantota port over which India raised concerns, sources said. The Chinese space and satellite tracking research vessel 'Yuan Wang 5' was scheduled to dock at the Hambantota Port from August 11 to 17, weeks after Sri Lanka witnessed a major political turmoil following massive mass protests over the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

Media reports said that India was worried the vessel would be used to spy on its activities.

Detailed story on P8

Satellites not usable after deviation: ISRO on SSLV maiden mission

'The SSLV-D1 placed them in elliptical orbit instead of circular one'

PTI ■ SRIHARIKOTA

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Sunday said the satellites onboard its maiden Small Satellite Launch Vehicle "are no longer usable" after the SSLV-D1 placed them in an elliptical orbit instead of a circular one.

The space agency said a committee would analyse and make recommendations into Sunday's episode and make



ISRO's new offering Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) during its launch from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, in Sriharikota on Sunday. PTI

changes with the implementation of those recommendations "SSLV-D1 placed the satellites into 356 km x 76 km elliptical orbit instead of 356 km circular orbit. Satellites are no longer usable. Issue is reasonably identified.

Failure of a logic to identify a sensor failure and go for a salvage action caused the deviation," ISRO said in an update on its official Twitter handle.

In its maiden SSLV mission, the launch vehicle carried The

Earth Observation Satellite EOS-02 and the co-passenger student satellites AzaadiSAT. SSLV had suffered 'data loss' in its terminal stage, after performing "as expected" in all stages after it had lifted off from the spaceport here on Sunday morning.

Screens showed that the satellite was well on its trajectory before suffering "data loss" as described by Chairman S Somanath. "All stages performed as expected. The first stage performed and separated, second stage performed and separated, the third stage also performed and separated, and in the terminal phase of the mission, some data loss is occurring and we are analysing the data and we will come back on the status of the satellites as well as the vehicle performance soon," he said from the Mission Control Centre, minutes after the launch.

In a first, US warship arrives in India for repairs, maintenance

This marks major boost to Indo-US ties, 'Make in India' initiative

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian shipbuilding industry achieved a major milestone when a US warship arrived here for the first time for repairs and maintenance. It also marked the growing Defence and strategic ties between the two countries.

Providing a huge boost to "Make in India" and "Aatmanirbharta in Defence" and adding a new dimension to the burgeoning Indo-US strategic partnership, US Navy Ship Charles Drew arrived at Larsen



US Navy Ship (USNS) Charles Drew at L&T's Shipyard at Kattupalli for undertaking repairs and allied services, in Chennai. PTI

and Toubro's (L&T) shipyard at Kattupalli, Chennai on Sunday for undertaking repairs and allied services.

The ship will be at the Kattupalli shipyard for a period of 11 days and undergo repairs in various areas.

This is the first ever repair

of a US Navy ship in India. The US Navy had awarded a contract to L&T's Shipyard at Kattupalli for undertaking maintenance of the ship. The event signifies the capabilities of Indian shipyards in the global ship repairing market.

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TRF to step up terror activities in Valley

Jaish front gives guidelines to intensify attacks on kin of officials who are not local

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Resistance Front (TRF), a front of the Pakistani terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad, which is responsible for the bulk of violence in Jammu & Kashmir, has issued a detailed set of guidelines for

ratcheting up terrorist actions in the Valley.

The intensity of target and explosive attacks are also to be increased, especially, outside Jammu & Kashmir as part of the latest terror tactic evolved by the terror grouping, according to the guidelines.

The guidelines include implementation of the "indigenous" character of armed resistance and attacks at various installations in the Valley, especially those directly linked to the armed forces besides identifying and targeting the near and dear ones of non-local officials stationed there.

Non-local officials from

administrative departments or police are to be identified and targeted at their native places, according to the latest jihadi tactic of the Pakistan-sponsored terror group.

During the last few years, the TRF has gained notoriety for being responsible for the bulk of violent incidents in the Valley. Anyone who advocates or supports the "occupation" and "brutalities" of the Indian regime is to be a prime target residing or stationed anywhere in or outside Jammu & Kashmir, according to the guidelines. Non-locals coming to Jammu & Kashmir with the intention to reside and

help/strengthen the Indian occupation are to be targeted. Kashmiri Pandits who are settled outside Jammu and Kashmir and "spread venom" against the so-called resistance struggle of the terror group are to be considered as prime targets, the guidelines have outlined. Non-locals and Kashmiri pandits residing in Jammu & Kashmir are also to be identified and targeted.

Tourists who are encouraged to travel to the Valley to show normalcy and demonise the so-called Kashmir resistance struggle are also to be targeted.

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Nitish dials Sonia as BJP-JD(U) rift widens

JD(U) won't join Modi Cabinet

PNS ■ PATNA

On a day when Nitish Kumar skipped the Niti Aayog meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Bihar Chief Minister reportedly called up Congress president Sonia Gandhi and convened a meeting of all his Legislators and MPs amid reports of a widening rift between BJP and JD(U).

While what transpired in the talk is not known and leaders of both parties are tightlipped, sources said they conversed for

about 15 minutes.

Interestingly, both the RJD and JD(U) have called meetings of their Legislature Party on Tuesday, indicating some major churning in Bihar politics in the next 48 hours.

Amid reports that the JD(U) was plotting to part ways with the BJP, the Nitish-led outfit has decided not to join the Union Council of Ministers. After former Steel Minister RCP Singh resigned from the Modi Government on being denied a Rajya Sabha renomination by Nitish, there is no representation of the JD(U) in the Cabinet.

"We stick to our stand of 2019 when, after the Lok Sabha

polls, we had decided not to join the Government at the Centre," JD(U) president Lallan Singh told a Press conference. Singh asserted that in 2019 when Nitish decided that the JD(U) will not join the Union Cabinet, he held wide consultation with leaders. However, RCP Singh, as the then JD(U) president decided to join the Modi Cabinet, he said.

"RCP Singh may be claiming that he had the consent of Nitish Kumar to join the Modi Cabinet, but has Nitish ever said so?" Lallan Singh asked.

He also said that in the 2109 State Assembly elections, the JD(U) was reduced to the third position in Bihar behind the RJD

and the BJP because Nitish became a victim of a conspiracy.

"When the time comes we will expose the conspirators," Singh said. It is believed that Chirag Paswan sabotaged JD(U)'s prospects at the behest of the BJP by putting up LJP candidates. The BJP has denied the charge, but JD(U) is not convinced. Singh also said that it is not decided that the JD(U) and the BJP will contest the 2024 Lok Sabha poll together. "When the time comes we will decide," he said.

Incidentally, recently BJP chief Nadda announced in Patna that BJP and JD(U) will contest the 2024 LS polls in the alliance.

NCR-PULSE

ATISHI INTERACTS WITH FEMALE STUDENTS
New Delhi: The AAP's Kalkaji legislator, Atishi on Sunday interacted with female students of her constituency and discussed the importance of social media literacy with them. Atishi also took part in this interaction while presiding over FreeDem Pathshalas's five day training program titled 'Digital Media and Information Literacy' which is being organised at the Karpuri Thakur Jan Jivan Camp in Srinivasपुरi in Delhi.

POLICE ARREST ALLEGED KINGPIN OF EXTORTIONIST GANG
New Delhi: Delhi Police has arrested a 28-year-old man believed to be the kingpin of an interstate gang of Mewat based extortionists who had been absconding for the last nine months from South Delhi. The accused identified as Saddam Hussain hails from Rajasthan and he was carrying a reward of Rs. 20,000 from Delhi Police on the information leading to his arrest in the extortion case. Hussain has disclosed that he with the help of other members of the gang have extorted money from more than 50 persons in Delhi during the last six months, police said.

DU LAW FACULTY HUNGER STRIKE ENTERS SECOND DAY
New Delhi: The hunger strike by a section of Delhi University's Faculty of Law students entered its second day on Sunday with the students saying there has been no response from the department or the varsity over their demand for postponement of their examination. Students claimed as many as 50 students are on hunger strike in the faculty. The students began the hunger strike on Saturday demanding postponement of their examination while contending that their syllabus has not been completed. "No official has shown up. We have not received any communication from the authorities. Around 50 students are on hunger strike," Shakti Singh, a second-semester student at the Law Faculty, said.

NCRTC CONDUCTS MAIDEN TEST RUN OF RRTS TRAINS
New Delhi: The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) has conducted the maiden test run of the RRTS train-set on its depot tracks at Duhai in Ghaziabad. The test run was conducted at Duhai depot on Saturday evening. "The NCRTC achieved an important milestone towards bringing in India's 1st Regional Rail on time, yesterday, RRTS trainset did a maiden test run on its depot tracks. The trainset was fed by recently charged NCRTC's 25 kV Traction system," the NCRTC said in a tweet on Sunday.

GRAP PLAN COMES INTO EFFECT FROM OCT 1
New Delhi: The revamped Graded Response Action Plan -- a set of anti-air pollution measures followed in Delhi and its vicinity according to the severity of the situation -- will come into force from October 1; 15 days before the usual date, according to the Commission for Air Quality Management. The revised plan, which is part of a new policy formulated by the CAQM to abate air pollution in Delhi-NCR, focuses on proactive implementation of curbs based on forecasts and restrictions can be imposed up to three days in advance.

In a first, US warship arrives in...

From Page 1
Indian shipyards offer wide-ranging and cost-effective ship repair and maintenance services, using advanced maritime technology platforms.

Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar, Vice Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral SN Ghormade, Flag Officer Commanding Tamil Nadu and Puducherry Naval Area Rear Admiral S Venkat Raman, and other senior officials of the Ministry of Defence visited the shipyard to welcome the vessel. Consul General of US Embassy in Chennai Judith Ravin and Defence Attaché at the US Embassy at New Delhi Rear Admiral Michael Baker were also present.

Terming the event as a red-letter day for the Indian shipbuilding industry and the Indo-US defence relationship,

the Defence Secretary said, "We are indeed pleased to welcome US Naval Ship USNS Charles Drew to India, for making her voyage ready. India's initiative also assumes special significance in furthering the strategic partnership between India and the US. It marks the beginning of a new chapter for deeper engagements."

He described the arrival of the US ship for repairs as a sign of maturing Indian shipbuilding industry and said at present India has six major shipyards with a turnover of nearly \$2 billion.

"We are making ships not only for our own requirements. We have our own design house capable of making all kinds of state-of-the-art ships. The country's first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier Vikrant is a shining example of the growth of the Indian shipbuilding industry. Under the new innovation ecosystem, vessels capable of undertaking autonomous missions have been built by Goa Shipyard Limited and some of our start-ups. The shipbuilding industry today is not just carrying out conventional things, but is also amalgamating the latest technologies with it," he said.

The Defence Secretary also asserted that the ties between India and US have been expanding in scale and scope and are based on common values and beliefs of an open, inclusive, and rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific and the rest of the global common systems. He said there has been a tremendous amount of traction in the defence industry cooperation over the last couple of years between the two countries.

The Defence Secretary also said Indian defence exports have seen a massive increase in the last four-five years. Exports, which were worth about Rs 1,500 crore in 2015-16, have now grown by 800 per cent to around Rs 13,000 crore.

A major destination for Indian exports is the US, he said thanking the US partners for their cooperation and support to the Indian defence industry. He hoped that the defence exports will increase further in the times to come.

Consul General of US Embassy Judith Ravin called it a new leaf in the Indo-US strategic relationship signifying the deepening bonds between the two nations.



THANKSGIVING

Thank you holy spirit for all blessings celine

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No force used with students protesting fee hike: IIT-B

Fee increase nominal, doesn't impact current students: Institute
T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

Denying that its administration had used force or involved the police in any manner in dealing with students protesting the recent fee hike, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-Bombay) said here on Sunday that the increased fees "do not impact the current students" and "are very nominal".

In a detailed statement issued here on Sunday, the IIT-B said: "We have not used force or involved the police in any manner, contrary to claims by some students. Police were present as a routine security measure due to the reunion convocation of earlier batches which involved around 2,200 graduated students visiting campus, but had absolutely no interaction with the protesting students".

Alluding to the fee hike announced by it, the IIT-B said: "Tuition fees for current PhD students is Rs 2,500 per semester, and Rs 5,000 per semester for new students, while for new MTEch students, it increased from Rs 5,000 per semester (after partial tuition fee waiver) to Rs 30,000 per semester. It may be seen that even these increased fees (which do not impact current students) are very nominal".

"The total amount that students pay for hostel stay was around Rs 2000 per month earlier, which has increased now to around Rs 2700 per month. This includes not only room rent, electricity and water charges but also medical fees. It may also be compared with the PhD stipend of between Rs 31,000 to 34,000 per month, and the MTEch stipend of Rs 12,400 per month," the IIT-B said.

Maintaining that it was "cognizant" of the fact that several of our students have economic challenges at home, the IIT-B said: "We are fully supportive of such students. Following the open house (held on July 26), IIT Bombay has taken several steps to address student concerns. Four student members from the elected student body have been added as

Divya Kakran requests Delhi CM to treat all Delhi-born wrestlers alike

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

Indian wrestler Divya Kakran who won a bronze medal in the 2022 Commonwealth Games on Friday took to her official Twitter account on Sunday to make a request to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to treat Delhi-born wrestlers who are honoured despite representing other States in a similar manner. The wrestler claimed that she had been living in Delhi for the last 20 years but had not received any help from the state government.

Kejriwal had taken to Twitter to congratulate Divya. When translated from Hindi, his post on Saturday read: "Well done, wrestlers. Our wrestlers have made a splash in the Commonwealth Games. In wrestling, India got a total of 6 medals in a single day, out of which 3 were gold. Many congratulations to Sakshi Malik and Deepak Punia for their Gold, Divya Kakran and Mohit Grewal for their Bronze medals."

"Thank you for congratulating me on my medal victory, respected CM sir. I'm living in Delhi for the past 20 years and doing my wrestling practice here, but I haven't received any prize money from the state government, nor did I receive any help. @Arvind Kejriwal," Kakran wrote.

Opp makes slew of...

From Page 1
However, his counterpart in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy highlighted the initiatives of his government in the two sectors and presented a note on host of issues post the bifurcation of the State in 2014.

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan said the Centre should not go against the federal structure of the Constitution and legislation on subjects listed in its concurrent list should be carried out in consultation with the States.

Besides telling the Centre, not to "challenge" federalism, Vijayan said steps should be taken to raise Kerala's credit limit as it has not yet recovered from the economic problems caused by COVID-19.

He further said the southern State has entrusted matters related to panchayats and municipalities, mentioned in the 11th and 12th schedules of the Constitution, to the local self-governing bodies as part of the decentralization of power.

Noting that Odisha is impacted by natural disasters almost every year, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik urged the Centre to make it a special focus state and allocate funds for disaster proofing.

"As regards my state, historically we have been neglected in the subjects in the central list viz telecom, railways and banking. We have the lowest density in all these crucial infrastructures and I would urge the central government to give special focus to Odisha," he said.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren sought a special package from the Centre to deal with the drought-like situation in the state. He pointed out that the state faces drought every three to four years due to lack of irrigation and this year, too, the state so far registered 50 deficit rainfall, with less than 20 percent of the paddy sowing target achieved.

financial support for a laptop and data connection, during the Covid-19 period, with support from its alumni. "IIT Bombay will continue to attend to the needs of the economically disadvantaged group of students. While no one enjoys paying more than what they used to be charged before, it is also an imperative that an institute continues to adjust its charges accordingly to stay alive and grow, to serve the students of today and tomorrow equally well," the IIT-B said.

"The majority of our students understand the need, and realize that the government cannot keep subsidizing them beyond a point. IIT Bombay is trying to convince the remaining few students to stop the stir by talking with them," IIT-B said.

According to IIT-B, every needy student was provided

permanet invitees to the fee committee. It was decided to reduce the Hostel Amenities Fund amount from the Semester Mess Advance paid to the hostels.

"Students who have economic difficulties (including those whose stipends are delayed by the sponsoring agencies) will be provided with a way to request and get a deferral of fees. IIT will work on scholarships for Masters (MTEch etc) students with financial difficulties, along the lines of scholarships for UG students. Students have been allowed to pay the semester mess advance in two installments to avoid a large burden at the start of the semester," the IIT-B SAID.

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Golden and silver shower...

From Page 1
Meanwhile, Annu Rani scripted history as she became the first Indian female javelin thrower to win a medal, a bronze, in the Commonwealth Games. Rani sent the spear to a distance of 60m in her fourth attempt to finish third. World champion Kelsey-Lee Barber of Australia stole the gold with a final round throw of 64.43m from compatriot Mackenzie Little (64.27m) who was leading at the end of the penultimate round.

Before Rani, Kashinath Naik and Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra had won a bronze and a gold in the men's javelin throw respectively. Naik had won the medal at the 2010 Delhi Games while Chopra won the gold in Gold Coast in 2018.

India's Sandeep Kumar won a bronze in the men's 10,000m racewalk event with a personal best time as he clocked 38:49.21m to finish behind gold winner Evan Dunfee (38:36.37) of Canada and Declan Tingay (38:42.33) of Australia.

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Ruckus in Noida society again as BJP man Tyagi sends 15 goons

STAFF REPORTER ■
NOIDA

There was a ruckus once again in Noida's Omaxe City in sector 93 on Sunday after BJP man Shrikant Tyagi, accused of outraging a woman's modesty during an argument over the plantation of palm trees near his apartment in the society, allegedly sent 15 to 16 goons there.

BJP MP Mahesh Sharma also reached the spot and urged police officials to take action immediately. Talking to the media, the Shamra said that I am ashamed for today's incident and I will complain to CM Yogi and the Ministry of Home Affairs for action against the police officers.

The residents also raised slogans against the police present on the spot. Police said that out of those who had entered the society, six have been detained and the search is on for the rest.

"I request you that I should also be treated in a similar manner as Delhi-born wrestlers who are honoured despite representing other states," she said.

In addition, Kakran also shared a video from 2018, when she had made a similar request to the Delhi chief-minister during the felicitation ceremony following the contingent's return from CWG success in Gold Coast.

TRF to step up terror...

From Page 1
They are to be targeted wherever they are spotted, the outfit has underscored.

The outfit has further highlighted that targets are to be selected and executed even outside Jammu & Kashmir. This is an indicator that it plans to expand its terror footprint in the Indian hinterland through the sleeper cells of the Pakistani terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad, experts said.

The outfit also plans to undertake awareness campaigns regarding Jammu & Kashmir outside the Valley and also at the international level.

At an open house with the students held on July 26, IIT-B had explained the reasons behind the fee hike, and got inputs from students on any issues. "The bulk of IIT Bombay's funding comes from the government, with fees being only 8% of our revenue. While tuition fees can never cover our overall costs, it is the expectation that the hostel related fees will at least be comparable to the hostel related expenses incurred".

"These operational expenses are well above the hostel fees we were collecting earlier, and even with the increased fees, the operational expenses are still more than the fees collected. And this is not even counting the capital cost of construction of hostels," the IIT-B added.

Asha Devi, Nirbhaya's mother said that girls were murdered even, before the provision for death sentence came and Gehlot has made fun of Nirbhaya, the law was made by their government.

"This shows their (CM Gehlot) mentality of supporting culprits while they don't have sympathy for victims. The law isn't bad, people's mentality is. He must apologise & should give his resignation," she said.

Meanwhile, reacting on CM Ashok Gehlot statement, Swati maliwal, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chief said that he should stop using the language of rapists, the way he made fun of Nirbhaya has hurt the sentiment of rape victims.

'Indian federal structure became model for...

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Union Ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari and Nirmala Sitharaman also attended while, the moderation of the meeting was done by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar are two big leaders who skipped the meeting.

KCR had earlier written a letter to Modi saying that his decision was a mark of protest against what he termed as the Centre's alleged blatant discrimination against States including Telangana. Nitish Kumar, who just recovered from Covid-19, is skipping an event led by the Prime Minister for the second time in a month with the reports of a 'widening rift' between the two NDA allies.

In his inaugural address, the Prime Minister highlighted that the seventh meeting was a culmination of months of rigorous brainstorming and consultations between the Centre and States to identify national priorities.

"For the first time in India's 75 years of Independence, all of India's Chief Secretaries met together in one place and deliberated issues of national importance for three days. This collective process led to the development of the agenda for this meeting," he said.

Modi highlighted the importance of all of the issues taken up by the Governing Council, especially the need for India to focus on modernised agriculture, animal husbandry, and food processing to become self-sufficient and a global leader in the agriculture sector.

He said rapid urbanisation can become India's strength instead of weakness by leveraging technology to ensure the ease of living, transparent service delivery, and improvement in the quality of life for every citizen of urban India.

On the agriculture sector, the Prime Minister asked States to focus on crop diversification expressing the importance of agriculture diversification and the need to be self-sufficient, especially in edible oils.

"We're meeting nearly half of our total demand for edible oil from imports. Overall, states were quite cooperative and are working on this aspect," said.

Modi underscored the importance of all of the agenda issues, especially the "need for India to focus on modernized agriculture, animal husbandry, and food processing to become self-sufficient and a global leader in the agriculture sector. Rapid urbanization can become India's strength", he said.

There were presentations on NEP 2020, G20, and the importance of exports.

The Prime Minister spoke about India's G20 presidency in 2023 and called it a unique opportunity to show the world that India is not just Delhi-it is every State and Union Territory of the country.

He said we should develop a mass movement around G20. This will allow us to identify the best talent available in the country.

Modi also said there should be a dedicated team for G20 in the States to derive the maximum possible benefit from this initiative.

While highlighting several initiatives undertaken to boost learning outcomes, capacity-building of teachers, and skilling, Union Minister of Education, Dharmendra Pradhan, thanked and requested further support from the States for the successful implementation of the National Education Policy.

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India's transformation has to take place in its states.

He reaffirmed the need for the combined efforts of the Centre and States to realize the vision of a resurgent India post the pandemic.

Every Chief Minister and Lt Governor present at the meeting addressed the meeting, highlighting the priorities, achievements, and challenges of their respective States and Union Territories with a special focus on the four key agenda items.

In his closing remarks, the Prime Minister said that each state should "focus on promoting its 3Ts, Trade, Tourism, Technology, through every Indian Mission around the world."

He said the States must focus on reducing imports, increasing exports and identifying opportunities for the same in every state.

"We should encourage people to use local goods wherever possible," he said. 'Vocal for local' is not the agenda of an individual political party but a common goal, he said.

The Prime Minister said even though GST collection has improved, our potential is much more.

"Increasing GST collection requires collective action by the Centre and States. It is crucial for strengthening our economic position and becoming a USD 5 trillion economy," he said.

Modi said the National Education Policy has been formulated after considerable deliberations. He said, "we should involve all stakeholders in its implementation and develop a clear, timebound roadmap for the same."

Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to the CMs and LGs for participating in the meeting and sharing their views and experiences saying "NITI Aayog will study the states' concerns, challenges, and best practices and subsequently plan the way forward."

He said the issues discussed in this meeting will define the national priorities for the next 25 years, adding that "the seeds we sow today will define the fruits reaped by India in 2047".

KCR's absence from the meeting was criticised by Union minister and senior BJP leader Piyush Goyal as "his unconcern for the people of Telangana and that the state CM was feeling ashamed after repeat electoral defeats" at the hands of the BJP.

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi- 110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of Non-movable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Pankaj Sharma (Borrower), Monika Sharma (Guarantor) LBGUR00002370762	Flat No. 109, Type S HIG -2, First Floor, Mahagun Mansion, On Plot No. 1/4, Vaibhav Khand, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad And/ or Flat No. 109, Block Milano, Type S, HIG 2, Mahagun Mansion, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad. Area- 2585 Sq. Ft.	Rs 1,28,39,197.85 as on August 3, 2022	Rs. 1,20,00,000/- Rs. 12,00,000/-	August 22,2022 from 11 AM to 12 Noon	August 30, 2022 From 11 AM To 12 Noon

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link-[https:// disposalhub.com](https://disposalhub.com)) of our E-auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited**. The Mortgagors/ notifice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **August 29, 2022 before 05:00 P.M** else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi-110005**, and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before **August 29, 2022 before 05:00 P.M** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi- 110005** on or before **August 29, 2022 before 05:00 P.M**. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favour of "**ICICI Bank Limited**" payable at **Delhi**

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the E-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited on 9372730494/ 7304914763** or **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited on 9310029933/ 9810029926/ 01244233933**

Please note that Marketing agencies at **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd** have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit **www.icicibank.com/n4p4s**.

Date: August 08, 2022
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

‘Excise dept reduced dry days without consent of Cabinet, LG’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The officials of the Excise Department have reduced the number of dry days from 21 days in calendar year 2021 to 3 days in 2022 without consent of the Council of Ministers and Lieutenant Governor, who is the competent authority. The Department of Vigilance (DoV) in its inquiry report said the proposal for reduction of dry days was mooted by the then Excise Commissioner in 2015 but rejected by the Deputy Chief Minister without any assessment. This time the same proposal was accepted by him without taking approval from the Council of Ministers on January 6, 2021.

“... the proposal for reducing the number of dry days was rejected by the Dy CM on 11.12.2015 without assigning any reason then however, this time the same was approved by him on 06.01.2021, without even taking approval of the Council of Ministers. This was done when at one hand officials of Excise Department extended compensation to the licensees in the name of closure of vends due to omicron related issues, however, the same set of officials did not undertake any effort to levy additional licence fee for least compensate the closure of vends reduction in sale of liquor) from such increased number of sale days



due to substantial reduction in number of dry days,” the report said.

The report said the department has reduced number of dry days from 21 days in calendar year 2021 to 3 days in 2022, without taking approval of the Council of Ministers and without taking opinion of the LG.....

According to report, the file that in December 2015 under the old Excise policy regime, the then Assistant Commissioner of the Excise Department proposed on 04.12.2015 (while proposing the number of dry days for the year) to reduce the number of dry days to 3 from 23 days on the basis of what is followed by the neighboring States.

“The then Excise Commissioner on 04.12.2015 recorded in his notings dated 04.12.2015 that all nearby states had already declared only 03

dry days in a year, and as per information collected from Excise Investigation Bureau (EIB), smuggling of liquor increase during dry days, and that liquor sale policy of Delhi should have consonance with neighbouring States and hence the policy of so many dry days (23 dry days in the year 2015) may be reviewed.”

“The then Principal Secretary (Finance) on 09.12.2015 recorded that concerns raised by the Excise Commissioner are valid and proposed to hold a meeting so that number of dry days is pruned. However, the Hon'ble Dy. CM over-ruled the proposal of the then Pr Secretary (Finance) to hold a meeting without assigning any reason and directed on 11.12.2015 in file CD No 015166743 to issue the notification for number of dry days for the year 2016,” the report said.

Govt extended Excise Policy without approval of CoMs, LG: DoV report

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Vigilance (DoV) inquiry report claimed that the AAP Government in Delhi extended the Excise Policy from April 1, 2022 to May 31, 2022 and from June 1, 2022 to July 31, 2022 without the consent of the Council of Ministers and competent authority Lieutenant Governor, causing “windfall gains” to licensees and losses to the Delhi Government. Similarly, the Excise Department officials made changes in the policy, reducing the input cost of beer and foreign liquor to the retail licensees without reducing the wholesale prices.

The DoV report claimed that extension of Excise Policy twice from April 1, 2022 to May 31, 2022 and from June 1, 2022 to July 31, 2022 was allowed without the approval of the Cabinet and the Competent Authority, in this case is the Lieutenant Governor.

Similarly, the period of L1 licensees was extended bot the time without taking approval of the council and without taking

opinion LG.

“It is to be noted that such extension without any increase in the tendered licence fee is in contravention to the proposal placed before and approved by the council of ministers dated June, 2021, wherein the departments proposed that at the time of the end of year 2021-22, the licence fee may be increased after considering the real time-based actual sale data,” the report said.

“However, no such exercise was undertaken by the officers of the departments before extending the period of license without any increase in the tendered license fee. Therefore, such extension without any increase in tendered license fee would prima facie lead to undue benefit to such licensee,” it said.

Sources in the Raj Niwas said the Excise Department, on receipt of from Deputy CM for allowing extension of licence period by two months processed the same on file and neither proposed to seek comments of the finance department before issuing such extension order nor took the

approval of the council of ministers for extension of the Excise Policy 2021-22,” sources added.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who had earlier projected that the excuse policy will earn a revenue of ₹ 9,500 crore, accused former LG Anil Bajjal on Saturday of modifying liquor policy overnight due to which liquor stores could not open in non-confirming areas, causing a loss of “thousands of crores of rupees” to the Delhi government.

The DoV report further highlighted that officers of the Excise department neither took the approval of the Council of Ministers nor the opinion of the LG before issuing the order on November 8, 2021, for revising the formula of calculation of rates of foreign liquor and removal of levying of import pass fee at the rate of ₹ 50 per case on beer, noted the inquiry report.

The decision led to a reduction in the input cost of beer and foreign liquor to the retail licensees without reducing the wholesale prices.

BJP leaders seek resignation of Sisodia



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP leaders led by Adesh Gupta and Leader of the Opposition Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Sunday protested outside the Chief Minister's Arvind Kejriwal residence over the new Excise Policy, demanding resignation of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia from the party.

BJP leaders raised slogans against Kejriwal, Jain and Sisodial. MP Hansraj Hans,

State General Secretary Kuljeet Singh Chahal, MLA Mohan Singh Bisht, Ajay Mahawar, O P Sharma, Anil Vajpayee, Abhay Verma and Jitendra Mahajan and other office bearers were present during the protest.

During the prortest, Gupta said Sisodia has understood that CBI is going to open all his layers of corruption. In such a situation, he is engaged in reversing the whole issue. So they are using different tactics to mislead CBI.

Rain causes waterlogging, flood-like situation in parts of Gurugram



Gurugram: More than two hours of rain on Sunday morning caused heavy water-logging and a flood-like situation on multiple stretches and areas in Gurugram.

Rainwater entered the house in Palam Vihar, Sheetla Colony, Surat Nagar, Sector-14, Chakkarpur, Rajiv Nagar, Sanjay Gram and several other locations.

Multiple city roads including state highways and the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway (NH-48) service lane near Hero Honda Chowk, Iffco Chowk, Jharsa Chowk, Sector-31, Narsinghpur, Sohna Road, Basai Chowk, Sohna Chowk, Sector 4-7-9, Hanuman Chowk, Atlas Chowk, Artemis Road, Kanhai Chowk, Golf Course Road, Vatika Chowk, Subhash Chowk, Baghtawar Chowk, Atul Kataria Chowk, Kapashera border, Udyog Vihar, Jocabpura, Sadar Bazar, Mahavir Chowk, Dundaheara near Medanta underpass and Jawala Mill.

Apart from these areas, Sheetla Mata Road, Sanjay

Gram Road, Old Delhi Road, Palam Vihar Road, Kartepuri Chowk, Sector-4 Road, Udyog Vihar and Signature Tower Chowk were also badly affected by the waterlogging.

Both vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement were disrupted due to waterlogging on multiple stretches.

Despite the holiday traffic was badly affected and the police struggled to keep the vehicles moving. The policemen were seen standing in knee-deep water while struggling to keep traffic going.

People also took to Twitter to post pictures and videos of their areas.

The rainwater was not only submerged in the city's main stretches and connecting roads but also accumulated on the internal sector road was also submerged in 3 feet of water.

The city's bus stand and surrounding area in old Gurugram were completely submerged in rainwater.

Light rains started at around 8.00 am on Sunday, but they gained momentum by 8.30 am till 10.40 am, which turned into a heavy downpour.

Flag bicycle rally held to promote ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ programme

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday flagged off a ‘tiranga’ bicycle rally from Tilak Marg to create awareness about the ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ programme to mark India’s 75 years of Independence.

The rally was organised by New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), in which 200 cyclists rode to Khan Market via India Gate, Shahjahan Road, Prithvi Raj Road and Rajesh Pilot Marg.

Flagged off the Tiranga Cycle Rally organized by NDMC to create awareness about #HarGharTiranga campaign to celebrate #AzadiKaAmritMahotsav. The enthusiasm & celebratory fervor of the cyclists /participants is indeed infectious,” the LG said in a tweet.

He also rode a bicycle and encouraged the other cyclists.



NDMC is organising various activities such as quiz, painting competition and cultural activities to promote the ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ campaign under ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’. The civic body is also displaying motivational messages on LED and other digital screens, hoardings, banners and posters under the campaign.

The vision of ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ campaign is to unify the nation and remember the country's freedom struggle by instilling patriotism in the

hearts of citizens, a statement from NDMC said.

However, the Vice Chairman of the NDMCSatish Upadhyay informed that the Cycle Rally culminated at Khan Market with the recital of National Anthem by the cyclists and Chairman of NDMC Ashwani Kumar also administered the Swachhta Pledge to Vice Chairman, Other Council Members, cyclists, market visitors and representatives of Market Traders Association at Khan Market.

₹6,760 cr missing from MCD's parking, conversion fee account: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday said that the RTIs have revealed that ₹6,760 crores went missing from Municipal Corporation of Delhi's parking and conversion fee escrow account under BJP's watch and demanding a CBI probe in the matter. In a tweet, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia demanded a CBI in the matter.

Earlier, addressing a press conference, the AAP MCD In-charge, Durgesh Pathak alleged that 6,800 crores were collected in the parking and conversion fee escrow account over the few years; no sign of where the money went.

“Since 2012, BJP ruled MCD has spent only ₹40 crores on parking, which implies there should be 6,760 crores in the escrow account, but there's only 1.5 crores left in it. AAP demands an investigation into this scam; the culprits must be given the strictest possible punishment immediately,” said Pathak, the legislator from Rajinder Nagar.

“There's a concept of escrow accounts that is followed in the government revenue collection system. Such accounts are maintained to deposit tax collected from a particular source of revenue and are dedicated to be spent only on that particular source,” said Pathak adding that all the

money paid by the public for parking and conversion goes into the escrow account.

“The MCD is meant to build parkings in Delhi with the money in the escrow account but the reality is in stark contrast. If we calculate only the figures of the last ten years, then since 2012, MCD should have collected ₹6,800 crore in this account,” said Pathak .

“What is shocking is that of this amount, the MCD has only spent ₹40 crore on parkings. This implies that there should be at least ₹6,760 crores left in the escrow. However, RTIs have revealed that the escrow account in question has only ₹1.5 crores left in it. It is clear

as day that money has been stolen. Once again, the BJP's misgovernance in the MCD has led to corruption amounting to ₹6,760 crores,” said Pathak.

“The AAP demands an investigation into this scam. It must be ascertained how ₹6,760 crores have vanished out of the MCD's treasury and looking at the behaviour of BJP leaders for the past few years, I can claim with confidence that this money has reached their personal coffers,” said Pathak. “It is unfathomable that they’ve made a joke out of an escrow account like this and left a meagre sum of ₹1.5 crores in it. We demand the LG to get the matter investigated immediately,” Pathak added.

‘DDA has sent demolition notices to Kasturba Nagar shanties sans any reason’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday alleged the BJP-ruled Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has sent demolition notices to the slums of Kasturba Nagar area without stating any reason.

The AAP leader, Deepak Singla said BJP-ruled DDA is going to demolish 200 jhuggis on August 18.

“Instead of protecting the people, BJP MLA Omprakash Sharma wrote to the DDA giving support to the demolition. Residents living in the slums

for about 25-30 years, can't understand why BJP wants to make them homeless. AAP demands rehabilitation for all the victims before demolition,” said Singla.

“The BJP has decided to go on a rampage against the poor in Vishwas Nagar constituency's Kasturba Nagar area.

The BJP-controlled DDA and the BJP MLA are conspiring to demolish a slum colony there. The DDA has sent a notice to the residents saying they'll demolish their houses on August 8,” said Singla.

3 hurt as car driven by ex-MP MLA rams into four vehicles

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A BMW car, allegedly driven by a former MLA from Madhya Pradesh, hit three to four vehicles late on Saturday night on Geeta Colony Flyover in Delhi, injuring at least three people. According to police, the injured were taken to a hospital and no arrests have been made yet following the accident. According to Sagar Singh Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, the incident took place at around 10:45 pm on Saturday.

According to the police, Sunil Jain, a former Independent legislator from Sagar in Madhya Pradesh, was driving his BMW at night when it rammed into two cars, which in turn hit a scooter and another car on the flyover. Jain's BMW first rammed into a WagonR car which hit a scooter, officers said. When local police reached the spot, they found that he had also hit a Kia Seltos car which then hit another car on the road.



Capital sees shortage of flags as demand soars

SHREYA ARORA ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the 75th Independence Day, wholesale and retail shops in Delhi are facing acute shortage of Indian flags due to huge demand.

Shops in Sadar Bazaar, Gafar market and retail shops are in full swing, as they are receiving more than 70,000 orders of the national flag per day from schools, government offices, RWAs and private retailers. “We are running short of flags even though our manufacturing units across Delhi are working round the clock,” said Vishal, an owner of a wholesale shop in Sadar Bazaar. He added that he had to cancel a few orders in the last few days due to the unprecedented demand of flags.

Several shopkeepers echoed that the government's

Har Ghar Tiranga Campaign has resulted in a humongous increase in sale of the Indian flag. The campaign has ignited a feeling of patriotism amongst citizens by urging them to hoist the national flag.

Another wholesale dealer, Sanjay said that they are daily receiving bulk orders of 25,000 to 50,000 from schools and government ministries. He said that it has become difficult to takethese huge orders coming at such short notice. “It would be better if orders are placed well-in advance, so that our production units get sufficient time to manufacture the flags,” he added.

Apart from retailers, people are also flocking the markets to purchase flags, hand bands, caps, umbrellas and other decorative items coloured in tri-colour

A customer who had came



for purchasing flags said they will be decorating their confectionary in Lajpat Nagar with the tri-colour flags ahead of Independence Day. Another buyer, Nandani Verma, a teacher in government school said that they were buying 2000 Indian flags to be decorated in each classroom of their school in New Friends Colony.

To address the huge demand of flags, the Indian Post Office has also roped in and is now providing the National Flag at ₹25. The customer can place their order via the E-post office portal and the tri-colour would be delivered to the nearest post office.

A shop-keeper, Ashok in Sadar Bazaar said that the prices of flags have increased by 50 per cent due to shortage of supply. “This year flag of dimension 18 by 20 cm is

being sold for ₹25 each in the wholesale market while previous year the same flag was being sold at ₹15,” he added. The paper hand flags used by children and bicyclers are now being sold at ₹10- 20 while last year they were sold at ₹5 each.

Ashok added that their manufacturing unit in Rohini is working day and night to meet up with this sudden increase in orders and government tenders.

Despite the escalating demands, there has been no supply of flags and other trifles from China, as nation-made flags are being promoted in the market. The fabric of the flag is made of satin or roto fabric, and the flag handles are made of wood though some plastic handles are also seen. Flags made of khadi-cloth are more expensive costing between ₹30 - 40 per flag.

Monkeypox: 2 UAE returnees found infected with strain A.2 of virus

NIV conducts study on two patients, finds they had been infected with a less seen variant of current strain of infection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As India's Monkeypox tally continues to rise, the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune on Sunday said that after analysis of the two cases pertaining to travellers who had returned from the UAE and subsequently tested positive in July, it has been found that they were infected with virus strain A.2. They said it is related to the lineage of hMPXV-1A clade 3.

In other words, the two patients had been infected with a less seen variant of the current strain of infection and bears similarity to cases that have cropped up in several Western nations earlier this year. Clade 3 is various 'branches' of monkeypox, each of which have unique genomic signatures and varying severity. Mentioning the details, the study also showed that the 35-year-old male and 31-year-old male from UAE -- tested positive for Monkeypox -- had no traces of sexual contact.

The development came soon after the country reported two fresh cases on Friday.

"Phylogenetic analysis revealed that the two cases were infected with Monkeypox virus strain A.2 which belong to hMPXV-1A lineage of clade 3...The complete genome sequences obtained from skin lesions of cases 1 and 2 showed similarity of 99.91% and 99.96% respectively with MPXV_USA_2022_FL001 West African clade," said the



ICMR-NIV study.

The term 'hMPXV' is an abbreviation for 'human monkeypox virus'. While scientists have traditionally classified monkeypox cases based on location - clade 1 for Congo Basin as it was the first to be detected and 2 for West African - many argue that the new strain (akin to the typically milder West African strain) deserves a fresh categorisation as clade 3.

Genetic data from other parts of the world however have indicated that there are at least two 'separate' monkeypox outbreaks underway outside of Africa at present, with a majority of the genomes across the world which belonging to the B.1 lineage. The A2 strain meanwhile has been detected in several Indian cases includ-

ing a Kerala man who returned from the UAE who had succumbed to the virus last week.

"Case 1, a 35-year, male, resident of UAE had developed low-grade fever and myalgia on July 5 2022. On the next day, he developed multiple vesicular rashes in the oral cavity and lips followed by a single lesion on the genital organ. The lesions were umbilicated with the size 0.5 to 0.8 cm," the study explained.

Another case pertained to a 32-year-old male from Dubai who travelled to his hometown Kerala on July 13, 2022, and tested positive for Monkeypox.

According to the study, he had developed dysuria and genital swelling on July 8. The next day he developed fever with chills, myalgia, backache and headache followed by mul-

tiple vesicular rashes on the genital organ and both hands on July 10. The lesions progressed and later spread to the face, back, neck and forearm with cervical lymphadenopathy by July 15, 2022. "He did not have any co-morbidity and denied any sexual or physical contact with suspected or confirmed MPXV case," it added.

The Niv on 6 August analysed two monkeypox cases of travellers who had returned from the UAE.

According to the study, the two cases were infected with monkeypox virus strain A.2 which is related to the lineage of hMPXV-1A clade 3.

"The complete genome sequences obtained from skin lesions of cases 1 and 2 showed similarity of 99.91 and 99.96 per cent respectively with MPXV_USA_2022_FL001 West African clade," read the ICMR-NIV study.

"Phylogenetic analysis revealed that the two cases were infected with Monkeypox virus strain A.2 which belong to hMPXV-1A lineage of clade 3," it added.

Both the cases' samples from multiple sites -- lesion fluid, lesion roof and lesion base -- were collected on the ninth post-onset day of illness i.e. 13 July, 2022, and July 16, 2022, respectively. They referred to the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for emerging and re-emerging diseases, ICMR-National Institute of Virology, Pune, India for the MPXV diagnosis.

Health Min renews facilities for nurses

Annual health check-ups, creche facility, 40/W working hours in list



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Annual health check-ups, a creche facility and work hours not exceeding 40 in a week are among the measures that the Union Health Ministry has proposed in a recently released draft guidelines with an aim to improve the working conditions of nurses in all healthcare institutions.

It has also recommended that all healthcare establishments may, as far as possible, provide accommodation to their nursing staff within or near their premises.

The healthcare establishments will have to establish internal complaint committees in accordance with the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at

Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and should also take necessary measures to ensure the security of nurses during night shifts. Appropriate measures may be taken to ensure proper lighting in and around the work settings to promote the safety of nurses.

The draft guidelines have been released on the ministry's website for comments from the public and the stakeholders within 30 days from the date of issuance. The document stated that the WHO Global Strategy on "Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030" calls for upholding "the personal, employment and professional rights of the health workforce, including safe and decent working environments free from all kinds of discrimina-

tion, coercion and violence".

Conducive working conditions would enhance patient care and contribute substantially to the overall healthcare outcomes. A safe and healthy work environment for nurses is imperative in order to envision quality nursing care. "Therefore, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has drafted the guidelines to give effect to the resolution towards improving working conditions of nurses in various healthcare establishments," it said.

According to the draft guidelines, all healthcare establishments have to ensure adequate infrastructure and well-equipped work stations in all units or wards to enable efficient functioning of the nursing staff.

It also mandates that all

healthcare establishments will have separate washrooms and changing rooms (including drinking water, pantry facilities, lockers, clean uniforms etc.) for the nursing staff and should identify designated resting rooms for nurses working for a prolonged hours.

The guidelines said the healthcare facilities should take initiatives to recognise outstanding nurses and take measures to upkeep the morale and motivation of the nursing staff. All healthcare institutions should provide paid maternity leave in accordance with the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 and other authorised leave or allowances and facilities in accordance with the government's guidelines or existing policies.

Parliament has become dysfunctional, democracy gasping for breath: PC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister P Chidambaram on Sunday said he was veering to the conclusion that Parliament has become "dysfunctional" and alleged that democracy is "gasping for breath" in India with almost all institutions tamed, emasculated or captured.

He also said Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu "failed" to protect Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge last week from being summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) when the House was in session.

The senior Congress leader also dismissed Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks linking the Congress' demonstration against price rise on Friday to the Ram temple foundation day, saying the anniversary of the 'shilanyas' was "far from our mind" when the date for the protest was fixed.

It was fixed taking into account that all the MPs will be in Delhi on Friday because the voting for the vice presidential poll was on Saturday, he said, adding that one can always twist logic to blame someone.

"Moreover, it was on August 5, 2019 that the illegal dismembering of Jammu and Kashmir took place! Let's leave

these aside when discussing a serious issue," Chidambaram said.

Shah had linked Congress leaders' protest in black clothes over the issues of price rise, unemployment and GST hike to what he said was the party's "appeasement" politics to convey its opposition to the Ram temple foundation stone laying by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5 in 2020.

Chidambaram also rejected BJP leaders' charge that the Congress' protest on August 5 was an attempt to save the party's top leadership that is facing questioning by the ED in the National Herald case.

"We had announced and

made it clear that the protests on August 5 were exclusively on inflation, unemployment and Agnipath. If people pretend to be deaf and blind to the announcement, what can we do?" he said.

On about Kharge's summoning by the ED during the working hours of Parliament last Thursday, he said it was a "sad day" for Rajya Sabha when the Chairman "failed to protect" the Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge from being summoned when the House was in session.

On ED probes against several Opposition leaders, Chidambaram refused to comment on any particular case but



asserted that it was increasingly and abundantly clear that the powers of investigation and the laws were directed only at members of the Opposition.

"Institutions have been tamed or emasculated or captured. Democracy is gasping for breath. We may have the shell of democracy, but inside, the shell has been hollowed out. This applies to almost all institutions, which is what Rahul

Gandhi alluded to in his reply (at a press conference Friday)," he said talking to a section of news agency.

With Parliament unable to transact much business during the Monsoon session due to frequent adjournments amid logjam between the Opposition and Treasury benches over a host of issues including price rise, Chidambaram said he is "veering to the painful conclusion that Parliament has become dysfunctional".

He asserted that the single big reason for this was that the Treasury bench had "no interest" in dialogue, discussion and debate.

"Let me ask, what calamity

ty would have befallen if the government had agreed to a debate under Rule 267 on price rise on the first day? The debate would have been concluded in one day. Instead, we wasted two weeks," he said.

The BJP seems more comfortable with governing without debate and without an Opposition, he alleged.

Chidambaram also hit out at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for her reply to the debate on price rise in Parliament in which she said that India did not face any risk of either recession or stagflation as its macroeconomic fundamentals are "perfect".

No one from the

Opposition hinted at an impending recession or stagflation and these were set up by the government like "straw men" so that the government can shoot them down, he said.

"Our concerns were rising prices and rampant unemployment. The twin factors have placed an unbearable burden on the poor and the middle class. The finance minister was obliged to spell out the steps that the government intended to take to moderate prices and to create jobs. The FM did not," he said.

Chidambaram also criticised Sitharaman's comparisons with other countries, saying they were "odious".

NIA arrests Delhi man for collecting funds for ISIS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested an active ISIS member from the Batla House area of the national Capital.

The "radicalised" individual Mohsin Ahmad, hailing from Patna, was collecting funds for the global terror group and was arrested during searches here in connection with the ISIS module case.

"Yesterday (06.08.2022), the NIA conducted a search in the residential premises of accused Mohsin Ahmad, son of Mohd. Shakil Ahmad presently residing at F- 18/27, Japani Gali, Jogabai Extension, Batla house, New Delhi and permanent resident of New colony,



ITI women, Digha, Dinapur cum Khagaul, Patna, Bihar and subsequently arrested him in the case pertaining to online and on ground activities of ISIS," the agency said in a statement on Sunday.

The case was registered suo-moto by the NIA on June 25.

"Accused Mohsin Ahmad is a radicalised and active

member of ISIS. He has been arrested for his involvement in collection of funds for ISIS from sympathisers in India as well as abroad. He was sending these funds to Syria and other places in the form of cryptocurrency in order to further the activities of ISIS. Further investigations in the case are in progress, it said.

On July 31, the anti-terror agency had carried out searches at 13 premises of suspected persons across six states -- Bhopal and Raipur in Madhya Pradesh, Bharuch, Surat, Navsari and Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Arariya in Bihar, Bhatkal and Tumkur City in Karnataka, Kolhapur and Nanded in Maharashtra and Deoband in Uttar Pradesh.

HAL developing long-endurance drone for vigil over LAC

New Delhi: State-run aerospace behemoth Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) is working on an AI-driven multi-role, advanced and long-endurance drone for strategic missions in high-altitude areas including the frontiers with China, people familiar with the development said on Sunday.

The rotary-wing drone will have the capability to carry a load of 40 kgs, including missiles and sensors, and it is being developed considering the requirement of the armed forces to keep a strong vigil over the mountainous areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), they said.

The HAL has set a target

of conducting the maiden test-flying of the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) by the middle of next year and plans to produce 60 such platforms in the first phase of the project, the people in the know told PTL.

They said the operating system of the long-endurance drone will feature applications of Artificial Intelligence and the armed forces will be able to use it for multiple purposes including transporting essential supplies. "The drone is being developed in such a way that it can carry a wide range of vital military systems including sensors, missiles and various other weapons," said one of the people cited above.

Climate change making prediction difficult for weather agencies across world: IMD

New Delhi: Climate change has hampered the ability of the forecasting agencies to accurately predict severe events, and weather bureaus across the world are focusing on augmenting the observational network density and the weather prediction modelling to improve predictability, India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said.

He also said that though the monsoon rainfall has not shown any significant trend in the country, the number of heavy rainfall events has increased and that of light rainfall events has decreased due to climate change.

"We have got the digital data of the monsoon rainfall since 1901. Parts of north, east

and northeast India show a decrease in rainfall, while some areas in the west, such as west Rajasthan, show an increase in precipitation.

"Thus, there is no significant trend if we consider the country as a whole -- the monsoon is random and it shows large-scale variations," the IMD chief said when asked about the impact of climate change on the Indian monsoon.

On July 27, the government had told Parliament that Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Nagaland have shown significant decreasing trends in the southwest monsoon rainfall during the recent 30-year period (1989-2018, both years included). The annual rainfall over these five states, along

with Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, has also shown significant decreasing trends, it said.

Mohapatra said an analysis of the day-to-day rainfall data since 1970, however, shows that the number of very heavy rainfall days has increased and that of light or moderate rainfall days has decreased.

"That means if it is not raining, it is not raining. If it is raining, it is raining heavily. The rainfall is more intense when there is a low-pressure system. This is one of the most important trends found in the tropical belt, including India. Studies have proved that this increase in heavy rainfall events and decrease in light precipitation are due to climate change," he told PTI.

Nocturnal lizard endemic to Eastern Ghats on verge of extinction

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Endemic to India's Eastern Ghats, Jeypure ground gecko (Cyrtodactylus jeypurensis), an enigmatic nocturnal lizard, is on the extinction path due to deforestation, mining, rapid urbanization and forest fires coupled with huge pet trade demand fuelled by booming social media amongst reptile breeders and keepers.

India has now sought its inclusion in the Appendix II species of the Convention on International Trade In Endangered Species of Wild Fauna And Flora (CITES) to be

held in November in Panama. Enlisted Appendix II species means they are not necessarily threatened with extinction but could become so if their trade is not regulated.

The proposal is likely to be taken up at the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties CoP Panama City (Republic of Panama) to be held mid-November.

India, in its document submitted to the Convention, that on the basis of available trade data and information on the status and trends of the wild population, it can be inferred that the regulation of trade in the species is necessary to

avoid it becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future.

Once thought to be extinct and then discovered again in 2010, C. jeypurensis is endemic to Eastern Ghats of India and has been recorded from very few localities in southern Odisha and northern Andhra Pradesh. The species is listed as Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

India expressed concerns that C. jeypurensis is or may be affected by trade because it is an attractive species and could become the target of commercial collection. "The species is handsome looking and docile,



which makes it vulnerable for the pet trade and there appears to be demand for it amongst reptile breeders and keepers outside India.

Live specimens of the species are in trade outside India as evidenced by advertisements on social media," as per the document. To corroborate its apprehension, the Government has attached annexures giving proof of details of the sale offers of the lizard on Facebook and Instagram.

Due to the restricted area of occurrence of the species, the ongoing decline in the species' population and continued

threats to the species, any collection of the species for the international pet trade is very likely to have a detrimental impact on its status.

"While the species may actually qualify for inclusion in CITES Appendix I, an Appendix II CITES listing as a start would provide regulation of international trade in the species and penalties for breach thereof, thereby helping to control illegal export of the species from India; and generate trade data regarding international trade and demand for the species.

Surveys indicate that the population of the species may

be declining at a fast rate. In the Galikonda and Aaraku valleys, Andhra Pradesh, the population spotted by a team of researchers from IISc was revisited by a team of scientists and research scholars of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) in 2021, which resulted in no observation during the same month in October.

Similarly, Paderu hill, where this species was found in good numbers (6 individuals) during a survey conducted by IISc team, was revisited by the ZSI team in October 2021 and only one individual was observed, said the document.

Maha Cabinet expansion likely before August 15

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is likely to expand his Cabinet this week by inducting at least 15 Ministers and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis is expected to keep the crucial Home portfolio, sources said on Sunday.

Top Government sources also said the civic polls in the State, delayed due to the OBC reservation issue being heard by the Supreme Court, are likely to be held in October after getting a clarification from the apex court.

Shinde and Fadnavis were sworn in as Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister respectively on June 30 after the resignation of Uddhav Thackeray due to a rebellion in the Shiv Sena ranks.

The duo have been functioning as a two-member cabinet since then, inviting criticism from opposition leaders, including NCP leader and for-



mer Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

"Ajit Pawar is leader of the opposition. He will have to say such things. Ajit dada conveniently forgets that when he was in the government there were just five ministers for the first 32 days," Fadnavis told reporters here on Sunday.

The expansion of the Maharashtra cabinet will take place "before you can even imagine", Fadnavis said in response to repeated questions from reporters.

Sources said the exercise will be carried out before August 15.

On Saturday, Chief

Minister Shinde said the functioning of the state government has not been affected in any way due to the delay in the expansion of the council of ministers and that more ministers will be inducted soon.

"The work of the government has not been affected in any way. The decision making process has not been affected. I and the deputy chief minister have been taking decisions and there is no impact on the working of the government," the chief minister told reporters here.

Fadnavis said the BJP has embarked on a mission to improve its footprint in Maharashtra in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections by identifying 16 parliamentary constituencies where opposition parties have had a consistent winning streak.

He said these constituencies included those held by Shiv Sena leaders who have now joined the Shinde camp.

"Since Shiv Sena and BJP

will contest the Lok Sabha elections as a coalition, the BJP will work to ensure the victory of the sitting Lok Sabha members from these constituencies," Fadnavis said.

He said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been given the responsibility to coordinate efforts to better the BJP's performance in Baramati, where the party had polled a good number of votes in the previous elections.

Fadnavis said Sitharaman is likely to tour Baramati in September and travel programmes of other central BJP leaders and Union ministers tasked with responsibilities for Lok Sabha polls will be finalised soon.

"In these 16 constituencies, the central BJP will concentrate its energies to better the party's performance," Fadnavis said.

Baramati is currently represented by Supriya Sule, the daughter of NCP chief Sharad Pawar. The seat is considered a bastion of the Pawar family.

Security beefed up at Kolkata's Indian Museum after shooting

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Security was heightened at the Indian Museum in Kolkata on Sunday after a CISF personnel killed a colleague and injured an assistant commandant of the force in indiscriminate firing.

CISF head constable Akshay Kumar Mishra, who fired around 15 rounds

from an automatic rifle on Saturday evening, was arrested, a senior Kolkata Police officer said.

An official at the state-run SSKM Hospital said that the injured assistant commandant of CISF, who suffered a bullet wound in one hand, was in a stable condition.

Security arrangements at the Indian Museum, the oldest and largest in the country, were increased following the incident, officials said.

Mishra has alleged that he was subjected to "harassment" by a superior for over two months, which led him to resort to the indiscriminate



firing that killed one CISF personnel and injured another.

The firing incident took place at the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) barrack at the Indian Museum situated near Esplanade here. CISF has been in charge of security at the museum since December, 2019.

In June, a city police constable had fired several rounds outside the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata before shooting himself dead. A woman travelling pillion on a two-wheeler died after being hit in the firing.

ITBP jawan held for raping, impregnating Sikkim teenager

PTI ■ GANGTOK

An ITBP jawan was arrested in Sikkim for allegedly raping a 13-year-old girl multiple times at his official quarters after which she became pregnant, police said on Sunday.

The incident happened in Rangpo town in Pakyong district, they said.

In her complaint, the girl's mother alleged that a teenaged local boy also sexually assaulted her for months. Police said they have detained the boy as well.

The girl's mother alleged that the paramilitary personnel, an assistant sub-inspector, raped her multiple times at his residential quarters in Raj Bhavan's Winter Camp in Rangpo since April.

Police booked the jawan, a native of Dharchula in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act's section 4 (punishment for penetrative sexual



assault) and section 6 (punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault).

In the same complaint, the girl's mother alleged that the local boy was also sexually assaulting her since February.

Police said they have nabbed the boy and taking legal action against him.

The girl was medically examined at the primary health care in Rangpo, they said.

Police said they are investigating the case, and trying to ascertain if the local boy and the ITBP jawan had any connection. The sequence of events is being established, they said, refusing to divulge details about how the alleged rapes and assaults continued for so long.

Ahead of Gujarat polls, Kejriwal promises sops for tribals

PTI ■ VADODARA

Am Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday promised implementation of the Constitution's Fifth Schedule and the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act in tribal regions of Gujarat if the AAP is voted to power in the State.

Kejriwal also promised that Gujarat's tribal advisory committee would be headed by a person from the community instead of the chief minister, as has been the case in the state.

He claimed the Gujarat Assembly elections, due later this year, will be a direct contest between the ruling BJP and the AAP.

Talking to reporters in Vadodra before addressing a rally in tribal-dominated Chhota Udepur district, Kejriwal also said that if AAP comes to power in Gujarat, each tribal village will get a



good government school and a "mohalla clinic".

Multi-speciality hospitals will also be set up in the region for free treatment of tribals, the Delhi chief minister said.

He also promised simplification of the caste certificate issuance process and houses to those who do not own one.

The government will also connect tribal villages with roads, he said.

The Fifth Schedule of the

Constitution deals with provisions related to the administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.

The PESA Act was enacted by Parliament in 1996 to ensure self-governance for people living in scheduled areas. The states were required to formulate rules for the effective implementation of the Act to strengthen gram sabhas in scheduled areas.

Kejriwal said despite 75

years of independence, tribals have remained backward.

"They are remembered before elections and have only been exploited by all. The Constitution provides for a separate system for tribals because the community has a different culture and is very backward," he said.

No government is ready to implement provisions made for them in the Indian Constitution because they are always eager to usurp their natural resources, Kejriwal claimed on the second day of his two-day visit to Gujarat.

"We will implement provisions of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution word to word. We will also strictly implement the PESA Act which says no government can take action in a tribal area without the gram sabha's consent," he said.

"There is a tribal advisory committee. Its work is to oversee the development of tribal

regions, how to utilise funds. The law says the tribal advisory committee chairman will be a tribal. In Gujarat, the chief minister heads the committee. This will be stopped," he said.

Kejriwal said tribals will also be provided employment and free electricity which he has guaranteed for everyone in Gujarat.

He claimed the forthcoming Gujarat Assembly election will be a direct contest between the BJP and AAP.

"So many Congress leaders have joined the BJP, many more will flock the saffron party, and the remaining will join the BJP after the election. It is more or less a merger of the Gujarat Congress into the Gujarat BJP," he further claimed.

"The ILU (I love you) politics between the two parties has come to an end. Now it will be politics of people, which is what the AAP does," he said.

Kejriwal said while on one hand is the BJP's "misgovernance" of 27 years (in the state), corruption and incidents of spurious liquor, on the other hand is a "new politics (of AAP) with new faces and new hope".

"I guarantee you that we will make the future of your children. But if you vote them to power, they will offer you spurious liquor," he said.

"Because they (BJP) are worried (of the outcome) in Gujarat, they harass us (AAP leaders) in Delhi," he alleged.

Asked about the AAP's chief ministerial face in Gujarat, Kejriwal said every person is his party's CM face.

"Every Gujarati will be the CM. We have come up with a new hope, new politics. Ours is the first party that talks of honesty," he said.

Can any other party talk about honesty, promise to construct schools? he asked.

"If we can construct schools in five years (of AAP governance in Delhi), why can't they (other parties)? But they will not do because their intention is not right," Kejriwal said. On the "revari" (sweet) or freebies that he has been promising during his campaigning, Kejriwal claimed the BJP government waived "Rs 10 lakh crore of its friends" and wants to waive more, but is short of money.

"So, they now say there is no need for free education and hospitals. I would like to ask the people of the country whether it is right to provide free education to your children or waive loans of their friends?" he said targeting the political opponents.

Without naming anyone, he also demanded a probe into whether people whose loans were waived offered donations to the party. "Whether the loans were waived for free or

something happened?" he asked. Kejriwal said he had faith in the Supreme Court which was hearing a plea related to freebies offered by political parties.

The AAP convener said he does not oppose any political party or its leaders and all he does is work for the people.

"Can anyone object to me over the issue of construction of schools for children? I had made an open offer that whoever wants to learn from me--whether he is the chief minister of BJP or Congress (ruled states)--come and learn, our country is one," he said.

Kejriwal also referred to a "survey", claiming 99 per cent people in Gujarat agreed to have free education, 97 per cent wanted free medical treatment, and 91 per cent said they would like to have free electricity. "Even the survey shows what we are announcing is liked by the people," he said.

Court issues warrant against UP Min Sanjay in 2015 case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After Rakesh Sachan, another Minister in the Yogi Adityanath Government, Sanjay Nishad, has landed in trouble as a court has issued a non-bailable warrant against him. The court in Gorakhpur has ordered the arrest and production of Nishad by August 10. The responsibility of compliance with this order has been given to Shahpur police.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Jagannath has ordered the police to produce Fisheries Minister Sanjay Nishad in the court, and if necessary, to take him in custody in compliance with his orders.

It may be mentioned that the NBW against Cabinet Minister Nishad was issued in a 7-year-old case. On June 7, 2015, a movement was going on in Kasarwal under Sahjanwa police station, to press the demand of 5 per cent reservations for Nishads in govern-



ment jobs. The agitators were sitting on the railway track. Meanwhile, a dispute escalated and the police resorted to lathi-charge in which one person had died while 24 policemen were injured in the violence.

Then it was alleged that the man had died after being shot by the police.

Due to this the movement became violent and the agitators clashed with the police. Several police vehicles were torched by the agitators. After this, a case was registered against many people, including NISHAD Party chief Sanjay

Nishad, for rioting, sabotage, arson and other related sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Significantly, Sanjay Nishad's party is an ally of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Both the parties had come together before the Lok Sabha elections in 2019. One son of Sanjay Nishad is an MP and the other is an MLA. Apart from this, Sanjay Nishad himself is a member of the UP Legislative Council.

Earlier, a Kanpur court, on Saturday, found UP's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Rakesh Sachan guilty in the 1991 Arms Act case. Unhappy with the decision, the lawyers and supporters of Rakesh Sachan allegedly left the courtroom after he was found guilty. However, the minister denied the allegation and called it a rumour.

Rakesh Sachan said, "Some cases are pending, the things that are going on are misleading". He added that the court's

decision would be accepted.

The court filed a complaint against Rakesh Sachan in the Kotwali police station late at night. The court in its complaint has asked Kanpur police to register a case in this matter.

Kanpur Nagar's Joint Commissioner of Police Anand Prakash Tiwari, after receiving the complaint, started an investigation in this matter. He said, "The statements of all related people will be recorded, the CCTV footage will be checked and then further action will be taken."

He added, "The facts of the complaint will also be examined. The investigation is expected to be completed in a day or two. Further action will be taken accordingly."

Sachan claimed on Sunday that he was currently in Kanpur. He said that he had to talk to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on this issue and after that he could be called to Lucknow.

After Indian woman kills self in US, FIR filed in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bijnor police registered a case in connection with the death of a 30-year-old Indian-origin woman in the US who reportedly committed suicide after suffering years of alleged domestic abuse by her husband.

Mandeep Kaur, 30, allegedly committed suicide on August 3 after posting a video online in which she spoke about years of domestic abuse by her husband Ranjodhbeer Singh Sandhu, who works as a truck driver.

Moments before her death, Kaur had released a video in which she narrates the details of the torture she faced during her 8-year-long marriage.

"It has been eight years. I cannot take daily beatings now. Papa, please forgive me. I am going to die," she said in the video.

The video led to a massive outrage on social media. Kaur left behind two young daughters aged 4 and 6 years.

In the video posted online, Kaur, seen crying and distressed, says she cannot take the abuse anymore and also talks about taking her own life.

According to reports, Mandeep Kaur moved to New York after her marriage but was allegedly abused by her husband Ranjodhbeer Singh Sandhu for not bearing a son and over dowry.

The Indian Embassy in New York expressed grief over Kaur's death and said it was in

touch with the US authorities at all levels and would render all kinds of assistance required.

Mandeep Kaur's sister Kuldeep Kaur said her sister was married in February 2015 and after the couple went to New York, the husband started torturing her. The sister claimed that the husband wanted a son and Rs 50 lakh in dowry.

Mandeep was found hanging from the ceiling fan of the house in New York where she

lived.

The father of Mandeep Kaur said that her husband had been torturing her for years, demanding a son. But Kaur said she won't leave her husband as she couldn't raise her two daughters, the father claimed.

In one of the unverified videos that is widely shared on social media, her husband can be seen beating her while the two daughters are crying in the background.

UP crosses 1 cr Covid booster dose mark

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In what comes as an incredible achievement ahead of the Independence Week celebrations in the State, Uttar Pradesh crossed the major milestone of administering over one crore 'precaution doses' of Covid vaccine on Sunday.

As a result of the successful execution of the ongoing special 75-day 'Amrit Dose' campaign in Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath, the state achieved another milestone while continuing to conduct one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the country since the rollout of the mass immunisation drive.

Committed to providing additional protection to the people against the novel coronavirus, Uttar Pradesh began administering booster shots (precaution dose) from January 10, an official spokesman claimed here on Sunday.

The state, on July 15, launched a special 75-day special drive to administer precaution doses to all aged 18 years and above at public vaccination centres free of cost.

In pursuance of the directives issued by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the authorities concerned are carrying out awareness campaigns regarding the importance of booster doses to encourage every individual above 18

years of age to take the booster doses.

Through these campaigns, information about vaccination centres, where booster shots are being administered, is also being provided.

Uttar Pradesh has so far administered over 35.27 crore total vaccine doses. Out of these, about 17,63,25,382 are first doses, while as many as 16,63,14,727 individuals are fully-vaccinated. Besides, over 2,70,85,700 vaccine doses have been administered to children in the age group of 15-17 and over 1,58,35,391 doses to children in the age group of 12-14 in the state.

It may be recalled that the Uttar Pradesh government has set a target to provide the



precaution dose of Covid vaccine to at least 13 crore people who are eligible for it

within the 75-day special drive which will continue till September 30.

FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IS MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Material cravings remain brief; spiritual progress gives better life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

What are our hopes for near and dear ones when they depart? That they would have gotten a better birth. This actually defines the philosophy of life. Let us critically examine what we consider success in life.

Let me begin with wealth. Practically, everyone wishes to have lots of it in order to obtain everything desirable, because money is the means for acquiring material objects, including ways for comfortable living. The underlying idea is to avoid suffering at any cost and enjoy life.

Sufferings are determined by fate and they are inevitable. Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple, died at the age of 56 due to a terminal disease. Wealth didn't help him beat the ailment.

Another human craving is for power, because it allows control over others, situations, etc. Do we succeed? Yes and no. Yes, for a limited duration, because power is also a material acquisition. It is a result of pious activities. Once they run out, power is gone. Hitler wanted to control the entire Europe, and maybe the whole world, with the help from his allies. He ruled Germany and some parts of Europe for a brief period and then he was stripped of his power. This shocked him to such an extent that he died by suicide; yes, suicide.



Fame is another human trap. We all crave for attention. There is nothing wrong with such a desire, but when fame becomes the yardstick for success, we go horribly wrong. Michael Jackson desired big success, which would ensure tremendous fame. He did succeed for some time till his insatiable appetite for fame took his life. He had sacrificed his sleep to be able to work more and more. And he had to be administered drugs to help him sleep. Doses kept on increasing till he never woke up.

The fourth yardstick of success is beauty. Models, film stars, etc., are paid huge sums, because beauty sells. Marilyn Monroe found out the dark side of it in a very depressive way, and she too died by suicide.

Fifthly, being independent, i.e. above rules, is another measure of success. What happens to some toppers in All India competitions when they flout all rules for their personal benefits? They are caught and put in jail. Their idea to prolong their sukha ends in lots of dukkha.

All popular notions of success are flawed, and they don't make us big or independent. They don't even prevent suffering or make our sukha permanent. What then should be the yardstick for success? It should be progress in life. Yes, progress is what we should look for. In younger days, it should be mainly material progress, because that will set us up nicely for our later years. Subsequently, it must be spiritual progress, however small it may be, because this will connect us with God, who is everything (The Geeta 7.19) and source of everything superior. (10.41) Then, all our inherent shortcomings won't matter; God will supplement whatever we lack. Fortunately God is ever willing to help; we just have to approach Him in a humble mood, in order to take His shelter.

From experiences of countless fortunate souls, who took shelter in God, we learn that we begin to succeed in all aspects of our lives. Our health in all its manifestations begins to improve. Physically we benefit; mentally we become stranger; emotionally we become mature; intellectually we become wise; and spiritually we advance. Our interpersonal relationships improve; we become more useful; and we get set for a better next life.

(The author is a spiritual teacher)

Defence Atmanirbharta is a real game changer

PM's push for defence Atmanirbharta can bring about a sea change in our armed preparedness

The contemporary battlefield is a complex mix of traditional and hybrid warfare. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has immensely contributed to the national security policymaking by reformulating the security objectives and displaying a political resolve to bring profound changes in security governance.

Modi's approach is purely India centric. One of his landmark achievements is the initiative of Atmanirbharat Bharat. Launched in May 2020, it seeks India's self-reliance in different sectors. As the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has transformed the nature of wars from mechanical to electronic, the import of different systems makes the security systems prone to various vulnerabilities like hacking.

The issue of spare parts and path dependency creates new complications tactically and geopolitically. The problem gets complicated with the new developments in hybrid warfare involving drones for drug and small arms trafficking, apart from the malicious use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Thus, the policy was well-founded and was the need of the hour.

In 2020, while we were grappling with the Corona pandemic and its impact on the supply chains in different sectors, PM Modi used the problem to find new opportunities and launched Atmanirbhar Bharat. Before officially formulating the policy, in 2018, the PM set up the Innovation for Defence Excellence (IDEX) to create a defence and aerospace ecosystem that engaged the R&D institutes, academia, industries, and promoted start-ups. These sectors could now directly deal with the armed forces via open challenges.

The Army Design Bureau is a facilitator and provides financial support to start-ups and MSMEs. The 100th contract of IDEX was recently signed. Apart from allowing the local firms, it was a stepping stone to India's civil-military fusion.

India's defence exports have increased considerably from a mere ₹2,059 crore in 2015-16 to a whopping ₹13,000 crore in 2021-22, with a rise of 54.1 per cent over the previous year. As the numbers of successful case studies are impressive, it becomes pertinent to highlight some achievements of PM Modi's initiative in the defence sector.

From the development of small equipment like the P7 heavy drop system that helps deliver combat stores in inaccessible areas to aircraft carrier Vikrant for the Navy, Atmanirbhar Bharat is achieving significant milestones. It is important to highlight the contribution of the PM in stopping the payment of royalties to Russia for the technologies that were transferred by the former Soviet Union and were domestically manufactured in India. For example, in the case of the T-72 tank, PM Modi himself brought the issue to the notice of President Vladimir



ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT-II IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR WILL INCLUDE REFORMS REGARDING THE PRODUCTION OF CORE TECHNOLOGIES VIA A PPP MODE. IT WILL ALSO LIBERALISE THE TESTING AND CERTIFICATION OF PRODUCTS, A SHIFT FROM THE PAST PRACTICES

(The author is Assistant Professor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda)



Putin and the needful was successfully done. This led the PM to bring out a list of banned items for defence imports in August 2020 and May 2021, with the third list announced in April 2022. The positive list currently has banned 310 items from being imported. The Indian army is now equipped with the Ashlesha radar, predominantly a 'Low Level Lightweight Radar' (LLWR). The radar successfully detects multiple objects of the adversary like helicopters, fighters and UAVs at low and medium altitudes and can be used in diverse terrains like plains, deserts, mountain tops, etc. It is currently helping the country against the Chinese PLA on the Northern and Eastern borders.

Developing the Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar is an important development for the Air Force. The radar enhanced India's technical capability in electronic warfare, making the country fifth in the world to possess such technology. The radar is 95 per cent indigenous, with only one subsystem imported. Other necessary inductions such as LCA (Tejas), Astra Air to Air missile, Akash Surface to Air missile system, and Light Combat Helicopter systems pile up the success stories of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Given the threat of PLAN, attempts are being made to upgrade the naval facilities through Swavlamban (self-reliance), focusing on developing 75 indigenous technologies. The past electronic warfare platforms such as 'Ajanta', 'Kite', etc., have been upgraded and can now successfully detect enemy combatants' presence without dis-

closing our position. The list is impressive, from developing underwater sensors to electro-optical Fire Control System (FCS), a world-class Combat Management System (CMS) and 'Battle Damage Control Systems'.

Moreover, 'Project 75-India' aims to build a series of future aircraft carriers and submarines that will qualitatively increase the stealth of the Indian Navy. The tactical importance of the submarine project can be ascertained from the fact that even our closest partners like Russia and France have refused the technology transfer of Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) technology that allows the submarines to stay underwater for a longer duration. So, one can ascertain the financial and strategic interests of the countries with a war-based economy.

Some critical but lesser known indigenous productions in Artificial Intelligence (AI) are Face Recognition System under Disguise, AI-Based Intercept Management System (IMS) for the western theatre, iSentinel threat detection and tracking system and finally, the swarm drones. These indigenous productions will redefine how we respond to the threats of hybrid warfare. Using such technologies for counter-terrorism will help bring peace to the country. Space has been added as a new battlefield domain, and in 2019, DRDO successfully conducted the Anti-Satellite (ASAT) test by accurately hitting a target. Further, under the Defence India Start-up Challenge 5.0, 35 areas such as cyber security, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and

augmented reality (AR) have been identified as focus areas.

In 2021, two Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs) were established in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to boost Defence manufacturing to attract investment of Rs 10,000 Crore in each DIC.

Creation of Defence Space Agency and Armed Forces Special Operations Division apart from the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) with Department of Military Affairs (DMA) to conduct joint operations will ensure that the next 25 years would be an 'Amrit Kaal' for the Ministry of Defence. New challenges have been accepted. For instance, Bhoomi, a hackathon initiative of the BSF, contributed to finding solutions in tunnel detection and an anti-drone system.

The objective of the PM is to ensure that we are battle ready for the next war, be it conventional, electronic or even on two fronts. Soon, Atmanirbhar Bharat II in the Defence sector will be unveiled, which will include reforms regarding the production of core technologies via a public-private partnership (PPP) mode. It will also liberalise the testing and certification of products, a shift from the past practices.

The aforementioned case studies are just a few contributions of the policy that the upcoming generation needs to be told. Such achievements of the country should be incorporated into the school textbooks at different levels to inculcate a feeling of nationalism and pride apart from encouraging the scientific temper amongst the budding scientists.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

ON THIS DAY MODIJI HAD LAID THE FOUNDATION STONE OF SHRI RAM TEMPLE, SO CONGRESS IS OPPOSING IT. ED AND INFLATION ARE JUST EXCUSES. —HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH




THE ONE WHO INFLECTS PAIN ON THE WEAK BY INCREASING PRICES, ATTACKS LORD RAM & MISREPRESENTS THOSE AGITATING AGAINST INFLATION, INSULTS LOKNAYAK RAM. — CONGRESS LEADER PRIYANKA GANDHI

Countering radicalisation in Assam with long-term vision

Elimination of Ayman al-Zawahiri is an opportunity for Assam administration to counter radical elements

The precision strike against Ayman al-Zawahiri will have far reaching implications for India. Indeed, the eliminated Al-Qaeda Emir's gaze had already been on India ever since 3 October 2014 when he proclaimed the formation of the Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent.

The 'shadow of Zawahiri' had encompassed the Rakhine province of Myanmar, Bangladesh, West Bengal and most of Assam. Moreover, Zawahiri had made controversial statements when the Hijab controversy broke in Karnataka. Although the recent arrests of several cadres of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Ansarulillah Bangla Team from different places in Assam has not come as a surprise, the matter of concern is



JAIDEEP SAIKIA

(The author is a conflict analyst)

the state's inability to fathom the extent to which the radicalisation efforts have taken place.

Indeed, the state has witnessed subterfuge by Islamists since the late 1990s when Pakistan-trained radical elements were arrested from the heart of Guwahati. However, the threat had all but weakened with en masse surrender of cadres after their return from places such as Batrasi in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). Indeed, by their own admission, the wayward group had realised that the motivation for which they had gone to train alongside tanzems such as the ISI chaperoned Lashkar-e-Toiba were at variance with their local objectives to garner aspects such as reservations for Muslims in the legislature.

Nizam-e-Mustafa, which

has become the primary goal for almost all Islamist groups that have a global bearing, was not in their agenda. The syncretism that characterised Assamese society of the time ascertained it and got disenchanted with the alien exhortation by the ISI, which had included assassination of political leaders and engineering of pogroms against the Bodo community, which sat cheek-by-jowl with the Muslims, and the belligerence dissipated.

However, there were some who, eschewing attention, continued with their sinister endeavours. Indeed, for a time it was felt that Assam was rid of the radical threat. But quite clearly they were silent, "not by the absence of activity but by the presence of non-activity".

However, the present

apprehensions of the Islamists that have brought back the limelight of the Islamist intimidation to Assam are not indicative of a turnaround in the Assamese Muslim psyche. While it is true that the target group for the Islamist minders have undergone a sea change and are directed primarily on the educated class, the fact of the matter is that an important constituency among the Muslim population of Assam ignored the overtures of the Islamists.

The atmosphere that prevails in the rest of the country, too, has had a sobering effect on the Muslim community, and it was evident that the quam sought no truck with the Islamists. In any event, the chaperons that are seeking to radicalise the Muslim community are exclusively from Bangladesh and have very little to do with the manner in which an indigenous Assamese Muslim identifies himself with the state's inclusive character.

But the fact of the matter is that there is a clear move by the Islamists from Bangladesh to make inroads into the Muslim community of Assam. An alert Special Branch of the Assam Police has been able to pre-empt the attempts and, to a considerable extent, thwart at least the opening moves of the Islamists.

However, marshes and warrens are plentiful in the Lower and Middle Assam and it would be less than prudent to lower the vigilance that

has characterised the manner in which the Special Branch has, albeit temporarily, halted

the march of the radicals. The porosity of the border with Bangladesh coupled with the pressure that the Islamists are facing in the country dictate greater watchfulness. After all, one of the primary motivation for the Bangladesh-based Islamists is to utilise the demographic jungle of Lower Assam as a safe haven and construct a "doorway" to metropolitan India in order to perpetrate terror which would be visible to a global audience.

Indeed, therein lies their intent. The fact that Ayman al-Zawahiri had mentioned Assam during his televised statement on 3 September 2014 when he announced the creation of the Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent must be seen in the light of the fact that that Assam and thereabouts

Ukraine grain headed for Lebanon under wartime deal delayed

AP ■ BEIRUT

The scheduled arrival on Sunday of the first grain ship to leave Ukraine and cross the Black Sea under a wartime deal has been delayed, a Lebanese Cabinet Minister and the Ukraine Embassy said.

The cause of the delay was not immediately clear and Marine Traffic, which monitors vessel traffic and the locations of ships at sea, showed the Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni at anchor in the Mediterranean Sea near Turkey.

Lebanon's transportation minister, Ali Hamie, tweeted the ship "that was supposed, according to what was rumored, to reach Tripoli port in Lebanon" changed its status. Hamie refused to comment further when contacted by The Associated Press.

The ship left Odesa last Monday carrying Ukrainian corn and later passed inspection in Turkey.

It was supposed to arrive in the northern port of Tripoli at about 10 am on Sunday. According to Marine Traffic, the ship Saturday changed its status to "order" meaning the ship was waiting for someone to buy the corn.

The Ukrainian embassy in Beirut said the arrival of the



ship has been postponed adding that an "update for the ceremony will be sent later when we get information about exact day and time of the arrival of the ship".

The shipment that was supposed to arrive in Lebanon comes at a time when the tiny Mediterranean nation is suf-

fering from a food security crisis, with soaring food inflation, wheat shortages and bread lines. The ship is carrying some 26,000 tons of corn for chicken feed.

The passage of the vessel was the first under a break-through deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations

with Russia and Ukraine.

The four sides signed deals last month to create safe Black Sea shipping corridors to export Ukraine's desperately needed agricultural products as Russia's war upon its neighbour grinds on.

Lebanon's worst economic crisis in its modern history

that began in late 2019 has left three-quarters of its population living in poverty while the Lebanese pound has lost more than 90 per cent of its value.

The economic meltdown rooted in decades of corruption and mismanagement was made worse by a massive blast in August 2020 that destroyed Beirut's port and the country's main grain silos inside the sprawling facility.

Large parts of the silos collapsed in recent days after fire caused by remnants of grain that started fermenting and ignited in the summer heat last month. Lebanese officials said last week that the Razoni was supposed to leave Ukraine and head to Lebanon on February 24 but the departure was delayed by the war that broke out days later.

On Friday, three more ships carrying thousands of tons of corn left Ukrainian ports and travelled through mined waters toward inspection of their delayed cargo, a sign that the international deal to export grain held up since Russia invaded Ukraine was slowly progressing.

Four more ships carrying agricultural cargo held up by the war in Ukraine received authorisation Sunday to leave the country's Black Sea ports.

6 Russian military officers sacked since war began: UK Intelligence



IANs ■ LONDON

At least six senior Russian military officers are believed to have been sacked since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, according a British intelligence update on Sunday.

The poor performance of the armed forces during the invasion has been costly for the Russian military leadership, most likely leading to the dismissal of at least six commanders, dpa news agency quoted the UK's Ministry of Defence as saying in its regular intelligence update.

Among others, General

Alexander Dvornikov was removed after being given overall command of the operation in Ukraine.

In addition, at least 10 Russian generals were killed on the battlefield in Ukraine, the update said.

Altogether, all this probably contributed to Russia's tactical and operational difficulties in the war against Ukraine.

The British Ministry of Defence publishes some of its intelligence on the Ukraine war in a daily update on Twitter.

Russia itself remains largely silent on personnel and tactical decisions.

Ukraine's Vatican envoy suggests Papal visit may be imminent

IANs ■ ROME

The Ukrainian ambassador to the Vatican suggested that Pope Francis might soon visit the war-torn country.

Ukraine has been waiting for the head of the Catholic Church since Russian launched its ongoing war on February 24, Andrii Yurash said in a tweet following an audience with the Pope, adding they would be happy to "welcome him before his trip to Kazakhstan", dpa news agency reported.

The Pope is planning a three-day trip to Kazakhstan on September 13. The Vatican did not make public any details of the conversation with Yurash, but only confirmed the meeting on Saturday.

The Ambassador, on the other hand, reported that Francis had underlined his closeness to the Ukrainian people and expressed the willingness to show this in a visit.

Since the war began, Pope Francis has said several times that he would like to visit Ukraine to promote peace.

However, he has been plagued by a knee injury for some time that has often forced him to use a wheelchair, so it seems unlikely he would make a long train journey to Kiev, for example.

Ukrainian risks life to rescue wild animals from war

AP ■ KYIV

Natalia Popova has found a new purpose in life: Rescuing wild animals and pets from the devastation wrought by the war in Ukraine.

"They are my life," says the 50-year-old, stroking a light-furred lioness like a kitten. From inside an enclosure, the animal rejoices at the attention, lying on her back and stretching her paws up toward her caretaker.

Popova, in cooperation with the animal protection group UA Animals, has already saved more than 300 animals from the war; 200 of them went abroad and 100 found new homes in western Ukraine, which is considered safer.

Many of them were wild animals who were kept as pets at private homes before their owners fled

Russian shelling and missiles.

Popova's shelter in the Kyiv region village of Chubynske now houses 133 animals. It's a broad menagerie, including 13 lions, a leopard, a tiger, three deer, wolves, foxes, raccoons and roe deer, as well as domesticated animals like horses, donkeys, goats, rabbits, dogs, cats and birds.

The animals awaiting evacuation to Poland were rescued from hot spots such as eastern Ukraine's Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, which see daily bombardments and active fighting.

The Ukrainian soldiers who let Popova know when animals near the front lines need help joke that she has many lives, like a cat.

"No one wants to go there. Everyone is afraid. I am also scared, but I go anyway," she said.

Often she is trembling in the car on her way to rescue another wild animal.

"I feel very sorry for them. I can imagine the stress animals are under because of the war, and no one can help them," Popova said.

In most cases, she knows nothing about the animals she rescues, neither their names and ages nor their owners.

"Animals don't introduce themselves when they come to us," she joked.

For the first months of the war, Popova drove to war hot spots alone, but a couple from UA Animals recently offered to transport and help her.

"Our record is an evacuation in 16 minutes, when we saved a lion between Kramatorsk and Sloviansk," Popova said.



An economist by education with no formal veterinary experience, she administered anesthesia on the lion because the animal had to be put to sleep before it could be transported. Popova says she has always been very attached to animals. In kinder-

garten, she built houses for worms and talked to birds.

In 1999, she opened the first private horse club in Ukraine. But it wasn't until four years ago that she saved her first lion.

An organisation against slaugh-

terhouses approached her with a request for help saving a lion with a broken spine. She did not know how she could help because her expertise was in horses. But when she saw a photo of the big cat, Popova could not resist.

She built an enclosure and took in the lion the next morning, paying the owner.

Later, Popova created a social media page titled "Help the Lioness", and people began to write asking for help saving other wild animals.

Yana, the first lioness she rescued, has become a family member since she could not find a new home due to a disability. Popova took care of her until she died two weeks ago.

The shelter is just a temporary stop for the animals. Popova rehabilitates them and then looks for new homes for them. She feels a special

connection with each big cat, but says she does not mind letting them go.

"I love them, and I understand that I do not have the resources to provide them with the comfortable life they deserve," says Popova.

At first, she bankrolled the shelter with her own funds from the horse business. But since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, the horse business has not been profitable.

With more than USD 14,000 a month needed to keep animals healthy and fed, she has turned to borrowing, and seen her debt grow to USD 200,000.

She gets some money from UA Animals and from donations, but worries about how to keep everything together have kept her up at night.

"But I will still borrow money, go to hot spots and save animals. I can't say no to them," she said.

China seeks meeting with Lanka as Colombo seeks postponement of research ship's visit to Hambantota

PTI ■ COLOMBO

China's embassy here has sought an urgent meeting with senior Sri Lankan authorities after Colombo sought a deferment of the planned docking of a high-tech Chinese research vessel at the strategic Hambantota port over which India raised concerns, sources said.

The Chinese space and satellite tracking research vessel 'Yuan Wang 5' was scheduled to dock at the Hambantota Port from August 11 to 17, weeks after Sri Lanka witnessed a major political turmoil following massive mass protests over the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

A 'third-person' note from Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry to the Chinese embassy in Colombo dated August 5 says "the ministry wishes to request that the arrival of the vessel Yuan Wang 5 in Hambantota to be deferred until further con-



sultations are made on the matter."The Chinese embassy in Colombo sought an urgent meeting with the higher Sri Lankan authorities to discuss the issue after receiving the note from the Foreign Ministry seeking a delay in the visit, sources here said.

Some Sri Lankan news portals also reported that Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe held a closed-door meeting with China's Ambassador Qi Zhenhong after Colombo sought a deferment of the planned docking.

But the President's Office denied the media reports over the meeting. On July 12, amidst the political turmoil in Sri Lanka, the then government approved the Chinese vessel's docking at the Hambantota port.

The Chinese vessel was expected to dock at the Sri Lankan port for 'refuelling and 'replenishment' and will conduct satellite control and research tracking in the north-western part of the Indian Ocean region through August and September.

WFP concerned about food crisis in Sri Lanka



IANs ■ COLOMBO

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is concerned about the impact of the ongoing economic crisis in Sri Lanka on food supplies for the country's poorest.

Nearly 6.3 million people, or three in 10 households, are at risk of food insecurity and need assistance, the WFP said in a statement of thanks for an aid contribution from Norway of the equivalent of about \$500,000.

Recent WFP surveys show that 61 per cent of families are either eating less, or eating less nutritious food, or even skip-

ping meals altogether, due to the acute emergency, reports dpa news agency.

An emergency programme is being set up to help 3.4 million people in Sri Lanka who are most at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition, it added.

The island nation, with a population of about 22 million, is in the midst of its worst economic crisis since it gained independence in 1948.

Most recently, the country, which is \$51 billion in foreign debt, lacked the money to import essential goods such as fuel, medicines and gas for cooking. Food prices have risen sharply and inflation is already over 60 per cent, according to official figures.

"We are deeply concerned about the impact of the current economic and political crisis on the people of Sri Lanka," Norwegian Ambassador Trine Joranli Eskedal was quoted as saying. Food shortages and rising prices have had a particularly negative impact on women and children in the island nation.

Ukrainian energy agency warns of risk at Zaporizhzhya nuke plant

IANs ■ KIEV

Ukraine's state nuclear agency Enerhoatom has warned against an increasing risk of fire and radiation due to the shelling of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.

"The Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant is operating at risk of violating the norms of radiation and fire protection," the agency said on Telegram, following an attack on the site on Saturday.

Shelling the previous day damaged a nitrogen plant and an auxiliary part of the power plant, dpa news agency quoted Enerhoatom as saying.

"There remains a risk of hydrogen leaking and radioactive particles dispersing, and the risk of fire is also high."

Ukrainian power plant personnel are trying to maintain safety levels despite these conditions but the threat due to the occupation of the power plant by Russian troops, however, remains high. The plant may have been mined by Russian troops, according to a report by The Insider which is critical of the Kremlin.

A video allegedly shot at the beginning of the week showed Russian military trucks driving onto the factory site and unloading goods.

One of the trucks drove into the plant's engine room.

The Insider said either the power plant itself or the area around it has been mined.

"The EU condemns Russia's military activ-



ities around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which is a serious and irresponsible breach of nuclear safety rules and another example of Russia's failure to respect international norms," said EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell, demanding access for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the plant.

On March 4, the nuclear and thermal power stations were both captured by Russian forces.

The plant continues to be operated by Ukrainian staff, under Russian control.

Last week, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi expressed grave concerns about the physical integrity of the plant, whether all necessary repairs and maintenance were being done, and the security of nuclear material.

2 dead, 5 missing after migrant boat capsizes in US

AP ■ KEY WEST (US)

Two people died and five were missing after a boat believed to be carrying migrants attempting to enter the US illegally capsized off the coast of the Florida Keys, the Coast Guard said.

Eight people were rescued, the Coast Guard said in a news release on Friday.

The agency described the boat as a "rustic vessel" that was making an illegal voyage with 15 migrant passengers. It was not immediately clear where the migrants were originally from.

Reports of the capsized vessel about 23 kilometers south of Sugarloaf Key reached the Coast Guard around 10 am on Friday. One person was rescued



from the water by the Royal Caribbean cruise ship Mariner of the Seas, the Coast Guard said.

"Our search continues for others that may have survived this tragic incident," said Rear Adm. Brendan McPherson,

commander of the Seventh Coast Guard District.

"This situation highlights the risks these migrants face as they attempt to enter the US illegally by sea."

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard responded to a ground-

ed sailing vessel that was believed to be carrying more than 100 migrants on Saturday afternoon.

The boat was spotted off the coast of Key Largo, near the gated community of Ocean Reef, officials said.

Rescue crews transferred the people from the grounded vessel to Coast Guard ships, officials said. Some entered the water without life jackets and needed to be rescued, the Coast Guard said. Photos taken from a WPLG-TV helicopter showed dozens of people sitting on the grass, having been given blankets and towels.

Officials did not immediately release details about where the people were from or specify how many were on board.

1 dead, 17 missing, 121 hurt in fire at Cuban oil facility

AP ■ HAVANA (CUBA)

A fire set off by a lightning strike at an oil storage facility raged uncontrolled in the Cuban city of Matanzas, where four explosions and flames injured 121 people and left 17 firefighters missing. Cuban authorities said a unidentified body had been found.

Firefighters and other specialists were on Saturday still trying to quell the blaze at the Matanzas Supertanker Base, where the fire began during a thunderstorm Friday night, the Ministry of Energy and Mines



tweeted. Authorities said about 800 people were evacuated from the Dubrocq neighbourhood closest to the fire.

The government said it had asked for help from international experts in "friendly countries" with experience in

the oil sector.

Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossio said the US government had offered technical help to quell the blaze. On his Twitter account, he said the "proposal is in the hands of specialists for the due coordination".

Minutes later, President Miguel Díaz-Canel thanked Mexico, Venezuela, Russia, Nicaragua, Argentina and Chile for their offers of help. A support flight from Mexico arrived on Saturday night.

The official Cuban News Agency said lightning hit one tank, starting a fire, and the

blaze later spread to a second tank.

As military helicopters flew overhead dropping water on the blaze, dense column of black smoke billowed from the facility and spread westward more than 100 kilometers toward Havana.

Roberto de la Torre, head of fire operations in Matanzas, said firefighters were spraying water on intact tanks trying to keep them cool in hopes of preventing the fire from spreading.

Cuba's Health Ministry reported that 121 people were injured with five of them in critical condition.

China keeps up pressure on Taiwan with 4th day of drills

AP ■ BEIJING

China said Sunday it carried out its fourth consecutive day of military drills in the air and sea around Taiwan in the wake of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the self-ruled island, despite international calls to calm the tensions.

The People's Liberation Army said the exercises focused on testing its long-range air and ground strikes. It did not say if it will continue the drills after Sunday.

Taiwan said that it continued to detect several batches of Chinese aircraft, ships and drones operating around the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island and mainland China, and "simulating attacks on the island of Taiwan and our ships at sea."

Taiwan's official Central News Agency meanwhile reported that Taiwan's army will conduct live-fire artillery

drills in southern Pingtung County on Tuesday and Thursday, in response to the Chinese exercises.

The drills will include snipers, combat vehicles, armored vehicles as well as attack helicopters, said the report, which cited an anonymous source.

China set up no-go areas around Taiwan for the four-day drills it announced immediately after Pelosi's trip to Taipei on Tuesday and Wednesday that infuriated Beijing, which saw it as a violation of the "one-China" policy.

China claims Taiwan and has threatened to annex it by force if necessary.

The two sides split in 1949 after a civil war, but Beijing considers visits to Taiwan by foreign officials as recognizing its sovereignty.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence emphasised that its military was surveilling the situation and had dis-



patched aircraft and ships to respond accordingly.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has called on the international community to "support democratic Taiwan" and "halt any escalation of the regional security situation."

China has so far conducted missiles strikes on targets in the seas around Taiwan, and sent warships across the Taiwan Straits median line. It has also cut off defense and climate talks with the US and imposed sanctions on Pelosi in retaliation for

her visit.

The Biden administration and Pelosi say the US remains committed to the "one-China" policy that recognises Beijing as the legitimate government but allows informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

US, Australia, Japan urge China to immediately cease military exercises around Taiwan

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States, Australia and Japan have urged China to immediately cease its military exercises launched following US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei, as they reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Pelosi, 82, was the highest-profile US official to visit Taiwan in 25 years. Pelosi's visit on Wednesday and her meetings with President Tsai Ing-wen and other leaders has infuriated China, which views the self-governed democratic island as its territory that should be reunified with the mainland, even by force.

China fired a barrage of ballistic missiles into the waters around Taiwan as it launched large-scale military exercises in response to her visit to Taipei.

A joint statement was issued by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong,



and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa after their in-person meeting in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, on the margins of the 55th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

"The Secretary and the Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the statement said on Saturday.

Sharing the region's desire for diplomacy to avoid the risks of miscalculation, they expressed their concern about

the People's Republic of China's (PRC) recent actions that gravely affect international peace and stability, including the use of large-scale military exercises.

"They condemned the PRC's launch of ballistic missiles, five of which the Japanese government reported landed in its exclusive economic zones, raising tension and destabilising the region. The Secretary and the Foreign Ministers urged the PRC to immediately cease the military exercises," said the joint statement.

Biden leaves White House for 1st time since getting Covid-19



AP ■ REHOBOTH BEACH

Ending his most recent COVID-19 isolation, President Joe Biden on Sunday left the White House for the first time since becoming infected with the coronavirus last month, settling in for a reunion with first lady Jill Biden in their home state of Delaware.

The president had tested negative Saturday, clearing the way to emerge from an isolation that lasted longer than expected because of a rebound case of the virus. The White House physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, had said in his last update that Biden, "in an abundance of caution," would continue his "strict isolation measures" pending a second negative test. The White House on Sunday did not say whether the president had a second negative test and had not provided a new report from O'Connor since midday Saturday.

"I'm feeling great," Biden said before boarding Marine One outside the White House.

The Bidens were expected to spend the day in Rehoboth Beach, a popular vacation destination.

Israeli airstrike kills 2nd top Islamic Jihad commander

AP ■ GAZA CITY

Israel said Sunday that it killed a senior Islamic Jihad commander in a crowded Gaza refugee camp, the second such targeted attack since it launched its high-stakes military offensive against the militant group just before the weekend.

The Iran-backed militant group has fired hundreds of rockets at Israel in response, and the risk of the cross-border fighting turning into a full-fledged war remained high.

Gaza's ruling Hamas group, which fought an 11-day war with Israel in May 2021, appeared to stay on the sidelines for now, possibly because it fears Israeli reprisals and undoing economic understandings with Israel, including Israeli work permits for thousands of Gaza residents, that bolster its control.

The Islamic Jihad commander, Khaled Mansour, was killed in an airstrike on an apartment building in the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza late Saturday.

Two other militants and five civilians were also killed in the attack, bringing the



Palestinian death toll to 31 since the start of the Israeli offensive on Friday. Among the dead were six children and four women. The Palestinian Health Ministry said more than 250 people were wounded since Friday. Israel says some of the deaths were caused by errant rocket fire, including one incident in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza in which six Palestinians were killed Saturday. On Sunday, a projectile hit a home in the same area of Jebaliya, killing two men. Palestinians held Israel responsible, while Israel said it was investigating whether the area was hit by an errant rocket.

Mansour, the Islamic Jihad commander for southern Gaza, was in the apartment of a member of the group when the missile struck, flattening the three-story building and badly damaging nearby houses.

"Suddenly, without warning, the house next to us was bombed and everything became black and dusty with smoke in the blink of an eye," said Wissam Jouda, who lives next to the targeted building.

Ahmed al-Qaissi, another neighbour, said his wife and son were among the wounded, suffering shrapnel injuries. To make way for rescue workers, al-Qaissi agreed to have part of his house demolished.



UNSC to address Gaza airstrikes as toll reaches 24

IAN ■ TEL AVIV/GAZA

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is to discuss Israel's airstrikes on Gaza in a closed doors session in New York on Monday, as the death toll continued to rise, with 24 people confirmed dead and 203 injured, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

The UN's most powerful body agreed to address the attacks following requests for it to do so made by the United Arab Emirates, Ireland, France, Norway and China on Saturday, dpa news agency reported, citing diplomatic sources.

Israeli forces launched Operation Breaking Dawn on Friday, a series of targeted airstrikes on Gaza that resulted in the killing of Taisir al-Jabari, a senior leader of the

Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group, among many others.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which is classified as a terrorist organization by both the European Union and the United States, is closely linked to Israel's arch-enemy Iran and is the second most powerful militia in the Gaza Strip after the ruling Hamas militant group.

Fearing reprisals for al-Jabari's killing, Israel closed its border with Gaza causing a fuel shortage at Gaza's sole power plant that forced it offline on Saturday.

As a result, Gaza residents are now limited to just four hours of electricity a day, compared to the previous 12, in what an energy company official described as a "catastrophic situation."

Blinken in South Africa on Africa tour

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken began his three-nation tour of Africa with his arrival in South Africa on Sunday.

Blinken's visit to Africa is seen as part of a competition between Russia and Western powers for support from African countries over the war in Ukraine. Blinken's trip to Africa follows recent tours by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and French President Emmanuel Macron.

South Africa is one of many African countries that have maintained a neutral stance on the war and have not publicly criticized Russia.

On Sunday after an early morning arrival, Blinken is to visit the Hector Pieterse memorial in Soweto township, which commemorates a student killed in 1976 when protesting South Africa's regime of racial oppression, apartheid, which ended in 1994.

On Monday, Blinken will describe the United States' strategies for sub-Saharan Africa in a major policy speech at the University of Pretoria. Africa has been hard-hit by the effect



of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the rising food and oil prices caused by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Blinken and Pandor will also hold a press conference Monday in which the two countries' different positions on the Ukraine war are expected to be visible.

Blinken will go on to visit Congo and Rwanda this week to end his international tour which also took him to Cambodia and the Philippines.

Gunmen kill 4 in attack targeting lawmaker in NW Pakistan

AP ■ PESHAWAR

Gunmen shot dead four people including two police in northwestern Pakistan in an attack targeting a provincial lawmaker from former Prime Minister Imran Khan's political party, police said.

Lawmaker Malik Liaqat Khan — no relation to Imran Khan — of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was wounded in the attack late

Saturday along with three others and was hospitalized in the provincial capital of Peshawar, police said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

The assault took place in the Maidan area of the Lower Dir district of conservative Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which is governed by Khan's party.

Police officer Zar Badshah said among those killed were the



nephew and brother of the PTI lawmaker, who was returning home after attending a funeral late Saturday.

The area has been a stronghold of late religious leader Sufi Mohammad, who preached a strict version of Islam in the 1990s and later led his followers in fighting in Afghanistan against the US and allied forces. It remained under the influence of the Pakistani Taliban until 2009.

9 wounded in shooting outside Cincinnati bar, say police

AP ■ CINCINNATI (US)

At least nine people were wounded — none critically — in a shooting outside a Cincinnati bar early Sunday, police there said.

Most of the victims suffered wounds to their lower halves, Lt. Col. Mike John of the Cincinnati police told news outlets. A police officer fired at a suspect who fled the scene,



but it was unclear if that person was actually shot. The sus-

pect was not in custody as of Sunday morning. "It is a little unusual when we do not know for certainty whether the individual the officer fired on was struck or not," John said.

John said police used what he called two "bang balls" — a "percussion instrument" with a "very loud noise" — to disperse a crowd they said had gathered around officers trying to provide aid to the wounded.

Bangladesh seeks China help to repatriate Rohingya refugees

AP ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday sought cooperation from China to repatriate Rohingya refugees to Myanmar during a visit by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who promised better trade ties, investment and support for infrastructure development in the South Asian nations.

China had used its influence in Myanmar to broker a November 2017 agreement to repatriate about 700,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees who fled persecution in Myanmar in August that year. Despite attempts to send them back, the refugees refused, fearing danger in Myanmar, which was exacerbated by the military takeover last year.

Yi arrived in Dhaka on Saturday evening and met with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen. They discussed bilateral and global issues before his departure on Sunday



morning, said Shahriar Alam, Bangladesh's junior minister for foreign affairs.

Bangladesh has strong relations with China, which is a major trade partner mostly for raw materials. But maintaining close ties with Beijing is challenging for Bangladesh, which also balances diplomatic and trade relationship with both India and the United States, China's main rivals.

More than 500 Chinese companies are active in Bangladesh. China is involved in the country's all major infrastructure projects such as sea-

ports, a river tunnel and highways, and helped built its largest bridge over the River Padma at a cost of \$3.6 billion.

Amid recent tensions between China and Taiwan, Bangladesh issued a statement reiterating its support for the "one-China" policy.

After winning elections in 2008, Hasina's administration closed the Taiwanese business representative office in Dhaka in response to a request from China, and since then China has increased its engagement in Bangladesh.

US Democrats climate, energy Bill clears initial Senate hurdle

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US Democrats pushed their election-year economic bill toward Senate approval early on Sunday, starting the sprawling collection of President Joe Biden's priorities on climate, energy, health and taxes on a pathway that the party hopes will end in final congressional passage by the end of this week.

The evenly divided Senate voted on Saturday to begin debating the legislation 51-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris breaking the tie and overcoming unanimous Republican opposition.

A dwindled version of earlier multitrillion-dollar measures that Democrats failed to advance, the package has become a partisan battleground over inflation, gasoline prices and other issues that polls show are driving voters.

The House, where Democrats have a slender majority, could give the legislation final approval next



Friday.

"The time is now to move forward with a big, bold package for the American people," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY.

"This historic bill will reduce inflation, lower costs, fight climate change. It's time to move this nation forward."

Republicans said the measure would damage the economy and make it harder for people to cope with sky-high inflation. They said the bill's business taxes would hurt job creation and force prices

upward and urged voters to remember that in November.

"The best way to stop this tax and spend inflationary madness is to fire some of the 50 so they can't keep doing this to your family," said South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, top Republican on the Senate Budget Committee.

Nonpartisan analysts have said the legislation, which Democrats have named the Inflation Reduction Act, would have a minor impact on the nation's worst inflation bout in four decades.

Ex-rebel sworn in as Colombia's president in historic shift



AP ■ BOGOTA (COLOMBIA)

Colombia's first leftist president was sworn into office on Sunday, promising to fight inequality and heralding a turning point in the history of a country haunted by a long war between the government and guerrilla groups.

Sen. Gustavo Petro, a former member of Colombia's M-19 guerrilla group, won the presidential election in June by beating conservative parties that offered moderate changes to the market-friendly economy, but failed to connect with voters frustrated by rising poverty and violence against human rights leaders and environmental groups in rural areas.

Petro is part of a growing group of leftist politicians and political outsiders who have been winning elections in Latin America since the pandemic broke out and hurt incumbents who struggled with its economic aftershocks.

The ex-rebel's victory was also exceptional for Colombia, where voters had been historically reluctant to back leftist politicians who were often accused of being soft on crime or allied with guerrillas.

A 2016 peace deal between Colombia's government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia turned much of the focus of voters away from the violent conflicts playing out in rural areas and gave prominence to problems like poverty and corruption, fuelling the popularity of leftist parties in national elections.

Petro, 62, has promised to tackle Colombia's social and economic inequalities by boosting spending on anti-poverty programs and increasing investment in rural areas.

8 of top-10 firms add ₹98,235 cr in m-cap



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the 10 most valued firms together added Rs 98,234.82 crore in market valuation last week, with IT majors Infosys and TCS emerging as the biggest gainers amid a positive momentum in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex advanced 817.68 points or 1.42 per cent.

From the top-10 pack, HDFC twins were the only laggards.

The market valuation of Infosys jumped Rs 28,170.02 crore to reach Rs 6,80,182.93 crore.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) added Rs 23,582.58 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 12,31,362.26 crore.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries Limited climbed Rs 17,048.21 crore to stand at Rs 17,14,256.39 crore and that of ICICI Bank advanced Rs 13,861.32 crore to Rs 5,83,261.75 crore.

The market capitalisation (m-cap) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) went higher by Rs 6,008.75 crore to Rs 4,34,748.72 crore and that of Bajaj Finance increased Rs 5,709.2 crore to Rs 4,42,157.08 crore.

State Bank of India's valu-

ation went up by Rs 2,186.53 crore to Rs 4,73,584.52 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) advanced by Rs 1,668.21 crore to Rs 6,21,220.18 crore.

On the other hand, the m-cap of HDFC declined by Rs 4,599.68 crore to Rs 4,27,079.97 crore.

HDFC Bank's valuation dipped Rs 4,390.73 crore to Rs 7,92,860.45 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued domestic company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, HUL, ICICI Bank, SBI, Bajaj Finance, LIC and HDFC.

India's outbound tourism to surpass \$42 bn by 2024, says report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Outbound trips from India will surpass USD 42 billion by 2024 and the government could bring about certain policy changes to boost this growing market, a report said.

The report titled 'Outbound Travel and Tourism - An Opportunity Untapped' by Nangia Andersen LLP in association with FICCI, highlights the up-and-coming Indian travel market and outline a framework for creating a more value for money experience for Indian tourists and travellers.

To facilitate ease of doing business and promote the interests of Indian firms dealing in outbound travel the government could look at steps like increasing direct connections to popular and upcoming destinations, allowing foreign cruise vessels to operate on Indian waters, besides taking concerted and coordinated efforts on multiple fronts to propel the outbound tourism market, the report said.

Nangia Andersen LLP Head — Government and Public Sector Advisory Suraj Nangia said Indian outbound tourism is going to surpass USD 42 billion by 2024.

"We are soon going to be the most populous country in the world with the fastest growing economy. The Indian outbound travel market is among the fastest growing markets globally with approximately 80 million passport level of purchasing power, especially among the middle class."

The report noted that allowing foreign cruise vessels to include Indian destinations



as a stop would encourage both inbound and outbound tourism as well as increase revenue for Indian ports.

With a growing economy, young population, and growing middle class, India is ideally positioned to become one of the most lucrative outbound tourism markers in the world. Europe sees 20 per cent of the travellers from India's outbound traffic. 10 per cent travel to Australia and New Zealand, while the rest of the traffic is towards South east Asia, it said.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner — Government and Public Sector Advisory

Poonam Kaura said, "With the positive response of foreign delegations and their policies, our government can surely establish bilateral relations with tourist-friendly countries for both inbound and outbound tourists".

In 2021, Indians spent approximately USD 12.6 billion in outbound trips, compared to USD 22.9 billion in 2019. While the reason for decrease in spending could be due to the pandemic but these figures point out the huge value that can be captured from Indian outbound travellers, the report added.

Revenue share from EV segment to touch 50% by FY27: Sona Comstar MD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Automotive Technology firm Sona Comstar expects its revenue share from the electric vehicle segment to touch 50 per cent by FY27, on strong pipeline of orders and an expanding EV market, a top company official said.

The revenue share of the company's EV segment in the overall topline jumped to 29 per cent in the June quarter from a meagre 2 per cent in FY20, Sona Comstar Managing director and Group CEO Vivek Vikram Singh said.

"As much as 66 per cent of our overall order book pertains to the EV segment. So, it (EV segment revenue) should account for 45 per cent in the overall revenue for sure in the next 3-4 years," Singh told PTI.

Singh further said, if the electric two-wheeler segment takes off in India, the EV segment revenue would be higher. "So, we will have to wait and see. If we win more programmes in the orderbook shape that will also help (us), then this share could reach 45-50 per cent by FY27," Singh said.

The company earlier this week reported a 5 per cent growth in profit after tax at Rs 75.80 crore and 18 per cent increase in the topline to at Rs 589.20 crore in the June quarter over the year-ago period aided by a 68 per cent rise in the Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) revenue compared to Q1FY22. The Gurugram-based company has two business verticals -- driveline and motor -- with 13 products. It has nine manufacturing facilities in four countries -- India, USA, China and Mexico -- as well as three R&D centres.

Its EV-focussed products include differential assemblies, reduction gears, traction motors, motor controllers, e-axles and integrated modules among others. According to Singh the company has won a total of 13 new programmes -- six from EV customers and remaining seven from the non-EV applications during the June quarter.

Of the six EV programmes, three are significant ones which will drive diversified EV growth. This includes one programme from an Indian original equipment manufacturer (OEM) of electric and ICE (internal combustion engine

'Inflation hasn't impacted imported spirits segment, investing in brand building'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The premium spirits segment has not been impacted by high inflation while affordability has improved in some states due to changes in the excise policy, said an official of American spirits major Brown-Forman, the maker of many popular brands including Jack Daniel's.

The company is seeing buoyancy in the on-trade segment with faster than expected recovery post pandemic and a "massive shift" in the upgradation and modernisation of the retail stores in many cities, including Tier 2, which also augurs well for premium spirits, said Siddharth Wadia - General Manager - India, Middle East & North Africa (IMENA) at Brown Forman.

India is a "strategic emerging market" for Brown-Forman, where it is strengthening its presence in tier II cities and actively investing in brand building and marketing initiatives through increased retail presence.

Brown-Forman, which had some launches in the recent past

with the RTD (ready to drink) offerings and some other variants, has plans to bring more innovation-based products to the Indian market. Besides Jack Daniel's official merchandise has seen encouraging responses here, he said.

"We continue to evaluate innovation opportunities in RTDs, flavoured whiskeys as well as in the overall premium spirits category," he said.

"In the premium spirits category, we are not seeing any impact on discretionary spending. From what we have seen so far, inflation has not really impacted the premium-end of the albo-bev segment and therefore it continues to experience high growth rates."

The company believes that even despite this inflation, consumers will continue to enjoy their aspirational or favourite drinks because it is witnessing a fundamental shift in quite a few of the markets towards premium spirits.

"Not to say that inflation is not hurting, but just that we feel that the net result of that inflation is still not as impactful on



the imported spirits segment," Wadia added.

It is seeing buoyancy in the on-trade segment with faster than expected recovery post the pandemic. There is no dearth of travel that is happening and that is a "positive sign".

"The other thing is that the reservations of in-home con-

sumption will continue to get lowered as an outcome of the pandemic from a long-term perspective because it has just opened up the comfort around the consumption of liquor while staying at home," he added.

While talking about the trends of the Indian market, Wadia said here consumers are

not only upgrading to international spirits but are also looking for newer whiskey and brands.

"Millennials, are totally clued into the latest trends and brands across the world. And with increasing aspirations, disposable incomes, and exposure to global brands, I believe they

are more open to experimenting and trying out newer things and different whiskeys from around the globe," he added.

Over the online sales and delivery of liquor in some states here, Wadia said the channel is still very small but "we believe that it definitely holds promise for the future of our category".

"Some states have been progressive and allowed e-commerce and online aggregators to deliver alcohol to consumers. It drives accessibility and reach, apart from also allowing consumers to make purchases in a safe and convenient environment," he said.

Jack Daniel's competes with brands such as Jim beam of Beam Suntory and Royal Challenge American Pride bourbon whiskey, recently launched by Diageo, through its Indian subsidiary United Spirits Ltd.

"We see competition as a positive development and welcome it. Given the fact that we have a heavy Scotch drinking legacy culture, with more brands coming into the American Whiskey space, not

only speeds up the awareness around American Whiskeys but also helps consumers to see multiple brands playing in this category which continues to enhance the salience of the segment," Wadia said.

Over the Jack Daniel's merchandise business, Wadia said it needed a bigger push and has launched its own online store in collaboration with its licensee in India.

"The merchandise helps us leverage the powerful equity of our globally iconic Jack Daniel's trademark by creating additional revenue streams and to connect with our consumers at a deeper level. And the response has been fairly positive and we continue to focus on expanding that," he said.

Globally, officially licensed Jack Daniel's merchandise is a huge draw among consumers. Jack Daniel's T-shirt is globally the second highest selling item after Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 whiskey and Jack Daniel's licensed products are sold across six continents and over 20,000 retailers worldwide, he added.

Auto industry expects car sales on fast lane in festive season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The auto industry expects car sales to be on the fast lane this festive season on the back of new launches and improved production but is cautiously optimistic on the road ahead once the festivities peter out.

The festive season, which usually witnesses a spike in automobile sales, begins this year on August 11 with Rakshabandhan stretching up to Diwali on October 25.

"We expect the festive season this year to be the best in terms of passenger vehicle sales on the back of new launches and improved production activity. The industry has been rolling out over 3 lakh units on an average in the past 4-5 months which is helping in retails," automobile dealer's body FADA President Vinkesh Gulati told PTI in an interaction.

He listed erratic monsoon in some parts of the country, inflationary pressures and the looming threat of a China-Taiwan war as some of the challenges to watch out for in the days ahead.

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) represents over 15,000 automobile dealers across the country. Kia India Vice President and Head of Sales & Marketing Hardeep Singh Brar said that supply chain issues are now showing signs of easing off, and market sentiments remain bullish.

"We are optimistic that a good festive season is ahead of us in terms of sales," he added.

Tata Motors President



Passenger Vehicle and Electric Vehicles Shailesh Chandra said the company does not see a concern regarding the customer demand until the end of the festive season.

In an analyst call, he said that the automaker expects the vehicle supply to improve with better semiconductor availability in the second quarter. "Going forward the challenges we see is that the high inflation and interest rate may start impacting the auto demand while there's no stress as far as the second quarter is concerned," he stated.

As far as Tata Motors is concerned, the company remains focused on demand generation activities, Chandra noted. Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Director (Marketing and Sales) Shashank Srivastava said the demand seems to be steady at the moment.

"We have to watch out for the retails, currently we are digging conclusions based on wholesales and on the pending bookings...Retail sales have been less than wholesales for the last few months... We also need to see how the economy performs overall and how the inflation and interest rates move," he noted.

28 firms secure Sebi's clearance to float IPOs worth ₹45,000-cr in Apr-Jul FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has given its nod to 28 companies to raise funds totalling Rs 45,000 crore through initial public offerings (IPOs) in April-July period of 2022-23 which has already seen 11 debutantes raising over Rs 33,000 crore.

Among the firms that have secured the regulator's clearance include Lifestyle retail brand FabIndia; Bharat FIH, a subsidiary of FIH Mobiles and a Foxconn Technology Group; TVS Supply Chain Solutions; Blackstone-backed Aadhar Housing Finance; Macleods Pharmaceuticals and Kids Clinic India, which operates super-specialty mother and baby care chain Cloudnine.

These firms are yet to announce the launch date of their IPOs and are waiting for the right time to float their issues as current market conditions are challenging, merchant bankers said. "Current environment is challenging

and companies with approvals in hand are waiting for the right window of opportunity to launch the initial share-sales. In fact, many of them have concluded the roadshows and are waiting for the right time," Prashant Rao, Director and Head Equity Capital Markets, Anand Rathi Investment Banking, said.

Going by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) data, total 28 companies obtained the regulator's clearance to tap the IPO route for fundraising during April-July 2022-23. Together, these firms are expected to mop up Rs 45,000 crore.

So far in current fiscal year, 11 companies have gone public to garner Rs 33,254 crore. Of these, a lion's share (Rs 20,557 crore) was raised by the public issue of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

All these companies hit the primary market during April-May and not a single public issue was launched after May, suggesting a dry spell in the

Steel players expect Govt to withdraw export duty; to go ahead with capex plans

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The export duty imposed on certain steel products recently will not force steel makers to review their capital expenditure plans as top producers expect it to be a "short-term" move to stabilise inflation.

On May 21, the government hiked the duty on exports of iron ore by up to 50 per cent and for a few steel intermediaries to 15 per cent. It also waived customs duty on the import of some raw materials, including coking coal and ferromanganese, used by the steel



industry.

The measures were taken to boost domestic availability, check inflation, stabilise prices of coal and address the issues of steel producers reeling under high input costs.

However, steel industry players had said imposition of export duties on steel products

will send a negative signal to investors and adversely impact capacity expansion projects under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

The Indian Steel Association (ISA), which represents the domestic steel companies, had said India may lose export opportunities and the decision may also impact the overall economic activity in the country.

According to the steel ministry, the sector's exports in FY22 increased by 25.1 per cent to 134.94 lakh metric tonnes (LMT), while imports dipped 1.7 per cent to 46.69 LMT.



IPO market.

This came after as many as 52 companies tapped the primary market to raise a record Rs 1.11 lakh crore in the entire 2021-22. The impressive fundraising could be due to a slew of public issues from new age loss-making technology startups, strong retail participation and huge listing gains.

The lack of appetite for the IPO

in current fiscal year could be attributed to sharp correction in the secondary market, disastrous performance of new digital companies, like Paytm and Zomato, and poor post listing performance of LIC negatively impacting the sentiments, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Vodafone Idea says industry needs tariff increases at regular intervals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



operators — Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone-Idea Ltd (VIL) — last year raised charges for data, arresting average revenue per user (ARPU) declines. Despite this, "the industry still operates on unsustainably low tariffs", VIL said in its latest annual report.

India continues to have the lowest tariffs globally, while the proliferation of unlimited data bundles have led to India

having one of the highest data usage (per subscriber) in the world," it said.

The ARPU levels remain lower in comparison to historic trends, despite consumers getting much more value in terms of unlimited voice and daily data allowances, compared to five years ago.

"The company thus believes that the industry will have to further raise tariffs at regular intervals, which is essential for operators to generate reasonable returns on their capital employed and support future investments, including new technologies," the firm said.

1-2 FINISH FOR INDIA IN MEN'S TRIPLE JUMP



PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Elldhose Paul won a historic triple jump Gold in a 1-2 finish for India as the country bagged four medals on a Super Sunday on the concluding day of athletics competitions at the Commonwealth Games here. After the mad rush of four medals coming within 30 minutes, India's medal tally from athletics swelled to eight — 1 Gold, 4 Silver, 3 Bronze — the best in the CWG history outside the country and only second to the haul at the 2010 edition in Delhi. The 25-year-old Paul became only the sixth Indian to win a CWG Gold since legendary Milkha Singh won it in

1958 in 440 yards. The Ernakulam-born Indian Navyman led India's historic 1-2 finish with a best jump of 17.03m in his third attempt after opening with 14.62m. His jump was though wind-assisted and his second best was 16.63m. Before Sunday's jump, he had a personal best of 16.99m. Paul's Kerala statement Abdulla Aboobacker was second with a fifth round jump of 17.02m. Aboobacker, who has a season's and personal best of 17.19m, was at fourth spot at the end of the fourth round but soared to 17.02 in his next attempt to jump to second. Jah-Nhal Perinchief of Bermuda won the Bronze with

his best jump of 16.92m. The other Indian in the fray, Praveen Chitravel, who came to the CWG as the second best Indian with a season's best of 17.18m, finished at fourth with 16.89m. India has won four triple jump medals in the past editions but this is the first time two athletes from the country have got podium finishes. Mohinder Singh Gill had won a Bronze and a Silver in 1970 and 1974 editions while Renjith Maheswary and Arpinder Singh had finished third in 2010 and 2014 editions. The experienced Annu Rani also scripted history as she became the first Indian female javelin thrower to win



a medal, a Bronze, with a best effort of 60m in her fourth attempt. The 29-year-old was well below her season's best and national record of 63.82m but that was enough for a third-place finish behind two Australians -- world champion Kelsey-Lee Barber (64.43m) and Mackenzie Little (64.27m). Rani's medal came on a day the country was celebrating National Javelin Day to mark Neeraj Chopra's historic gold in Tokyo Olympics on the same day last year. Before Rani, Kashinath Naik and Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra had won a Bronze and a Gold in the men's javelin throw respec-

tively. Naik had won the medal at the 2010 Delhi Games, while Chopra won the gold in Gold Coast in 2018. The other Indian in the fray, Shilpa Rani was seventh with a best of 54.62m. Veteran race walker Sandeep Kumar added another Bronze in men's 10,000m event with a personal best time of 38:49.21. The other Indian in the fray, Amit Khatri finished ninth with a season best time of 43:04.97. Kumar's medal was the second in this edition after Priyanka Goswami's Silver in the same event on Saturday. He also became only the second Indian male race walker to win a medal in CWG after Harminder Singh, who won a Bronze in 20km event in the 2010 edition. Kumar also holds national record in both 20km and 50km race walk events. But, he was competing in 10,000m as the 20km event was not there in the Birmingham CWG.

'Influence of late Nikolai in my career is unmatched'

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Coaches may come and go but late Nikolai Snesev will have a special place in star steeplechaser Avinash Sable's heart for his contribution in his overall growth as an international athlete. Sable beat a strong field of Kenyan athletes to win Silver in the 3000m steeplechase at the Commonwealth Games on Saturday and it was the Belarusian, who instilled that self belief in the army man. Snesev tragically passed away in 2021 after he came back to India that year, following a long gap. "I will never forget what coach Nikolai Snesev did for me. Many coaches will come and go in my life but his influence on my career has been life-changing. He changed my belief. I have never seen a more honest coach in my life," Avinash choked up while speaking about Snesev. "The preparations for the Olympics were going well when he left us (died in March 2021). It was a really difficult time for me. I would have never believed that Indians could fight Kenyans. I thought Indians go to international events just to participate. He changed that for me," he added. "Indians have the ability to do well in all events at the world level. We have to believe that we have skills and talent. We should not be intimidated when we are up against international athletes. It is not as difficult as we often think," Avinash said.



Gold Rush in Boxing

Nikhat Zareen, Amit Panghal, Nitu grab maiden CWG yellow metals

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

The indomitable Nikhat Zareen added a Commonwealth Games light flyweight (50kg) title to her bulging trophy cabinet while Amit Panghal (51kg) began his redemption journey with a much-needed Gold winning show, here on Sunday. Nikhat, who is on a winning spree since the Nationals last year, asserted her dominance over Northern Ireland's Carly McNaul as she punched her way to a comprehensive 5-0 win in her maiden CWG appearance.

Panghal, on the other hand, avenged his 2018 Commonwealth Games final loss against Kieran MacDonald by clinching the title with a comprehensive 5-0 win over the favourite. Indian boxers made it three out of three Golds on the day as young Nitu Ghanghas (48kg) too reigned supreme on her CWG debut.

Sagar Ahlawat will play his final bout later tonight. The India pugilists will return with seven medals from Birmingham, two less than the previous edition. Nikhat started off the year by clinching a Gold at the prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament before going on to become a world champion. The Telangana boxer, who dropped from 52kg to 50kg for the CWG, glided around the ring, landing hooks and tight jabs at will. Her defence was equally impressive. Such was her dominance that when the nine minutes ended there was no



doubt which way the decision would go. Having lost to a Briton four years ago at the same stage in Gold Coast, the 26-year-old Panghal was at his aggressive best against MacDonald as he clinched the yellow metal with a 5-0 verdict. With the Gold, Panghal also put his disappointing Tokyo Olympics outing where he made a round of 16 exit, behind. Nitu, on the other hand, upstaged 2019 world championships Bronze medallist Demie-Jade Resztan of England by a 5-0 unanimous verdict. The first Indian boxer to take the ring, Nitu, competing in her first CWG, looked completely in control throughout the nine minutes, giving the home boxer no chance. "I am so happy, I can hardly breathe," Nitu told reporters. The legendary MC Mary Kom had won the coveted yellow metal in the same category at the 2018 Games.

Sindhu, Sen one step away from maiden Gold



PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu stayed on course for an elusive Gold medal while Lakshya Sen regained his rhythm just in time to enter his maiden final at the Commonwealth Games here on Sunday. Sindhu rode on her superior technical superiority to outwit Singapore's Yeo Jia Min 21-19, 21-17 in a 49-minute contest to reach her second successive final. The Indian had also beaten her in the team event. In the following match, world number 10 Sen lost his way after a dominating start against 87-ranked Jia Heng Teh of Singapore. Sen however recovered to complete a 21-10, 18-21, 21-16 win in the men's singles semifinals. Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty ensured a third Gold medal match for India on Monday when they downed Malaysia's Chen Peng Soon and Tian Kian Men 21-6, 21-15 to reach the men's doubles final. The world number 7 duo was too



good for the Malaysians. It could have been an all-Indian men's final but an error-prone Kidambi Srikanth squandered a first game advantage to lose to lower-ranked Tze Yong Ng of Malaysia 21-13, 19-21, 21-10. The world number 42 Tze had shocked reigning world champion Yew Kean Loh of Singapore in the quarterfinal. The last edition's Silver medallist will now fight for the Bronze and so will the Indian women's doubles pairing of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichane who lost to the seasoned Malaysian combine of Thinnah Muralitharan and Pearly Koon Le Tan in the semifinals in straight games.

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Star Indian para table tennis player Bhavina Patel won a Gold medal in the women's singles class 3-5 at the Commonwealth Games here on Saturday. The 35-year-old from Gujarat, who had won a Silver at Tokyo Paralympics, prevailed 12-10, 11-2, 11-9 over Nigeria's Ifechukwude Christiana Ikpeoyi to cap off a superb show at the quadrennial event. Bhavina reached the world No. 2 ranking by winning the Silver medal in the individual category at the 2011 PTT Thailand Open.

Bhavina wins Gold, Sonalben bags Bronze medal in para TT



Besides, she also won a Silver medal in the women's singles class 4 at the Asian Para Table Tennis Championships in Beijing in 2013. In 2017, Bhavina bagged a Bronze in the Asian Para Table Tennis Championships in Beijing. Sonalben Manubhai Patel also gave India a medal, claiming a Bronze in women's singles class 3-5.

If I am training right I become my own psychologist: Vinesh

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

A drastic change in training regimen and the extra push that her family gave enabled Vinesh Phogat to turn the tide after a forgettable last 12 months during which she "hit rock bottom mentally". A premature exit from the Tokyo Olympics, where she went in as the top seed, injury issues and run-ins with the wrestling federation pushed her into an abyss. The 27-year-old's existing training methods were not yielding results. She had to go back to the drawing board. After undergoing an elbow surgery in September, Vinesh only wanted to get her training right. "If my training is going right, I feel fine mentally as well," she said after easing to a 53kg Gold at the Commonwealth Games on Saturday. "Only I know what I have done to win this medal. It feels a lot more special considering what I have gone through over the past 12 months," said Vinesh who is now a three-time CWG Gold medallist. Vinesh, who had to really dig deep to win the trials to make the CWG squad, was struggling for sparring partners in her category. The women were not strong enough so she decided to train with the U-15 boys. "She was not getting the required training earlier, now she is. That is the difference according to me," said national coach Jitender Yadav on Vinesh's victorious comeback.

Sharath-Sathiyan settle for Silver

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

The seasoned Indian pair of Sharath Kamal and G Sathiyan was outsmarted by familiar foes Paul Drinkhall and Liam Pitchford of England in the men's doubles final at the Commonwealth Games here on Sunday. The Indian duo had to settle for Silver for the second successive edition after losing 11-8, 8-11, 3-11, 11-7, 4-11 to the English combine. It was a repeat of the 2018 final in Gold Coast and to the disappointment of the Indians, it was the same result. The Indian contingent has been getting tons of support from the crowd here but at the NEC table tennis arena on Sunday, English fans outnumbered the Indians. With very little separating the two pairs, the Indians began well with Sathiyan hitting a crisp forehand winner to go 1-0 up in the gold medal match. Drinkhall and Pitchford fought back in the second game. A down the line backhand from



Pitchford made it 5-1 for England. The Indians were having a tough time retrieving the serve with their opponents mixing things up. Sharath's returns from the backhand were yielding mixed results. Pitchford's cross court winner after a long rally gave England a 7-5 lead before they levelled the tie. The English pair ran away with the third game which had the best rally of the match which Indians won after trading a series of booming forehands far away from the table.

The Indians were able to take the final to the decider after course correction in the fourth game. However, Drinkhall and Pitchford took a huge six point lead from 4-4 to gain six gold medal points in the fifth game. They converted the very first one drawing a huge roar from the crowd. The Indian pair shook hand with its opponents who once again proved better on the day. With the Silver, 40-year-old Sharath increased his CWG medal count to 11 with the



Sreeja misses Bronze by whisker

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

India's Sreeja Akula suffered a heartbreaking loss at the Commonwealth Games here as she went down to Australia's Yangzi Liu 3-4 in a close Bronze medal play-off. Sreeja went down 11-3, 6-11, 2-11, 11-7, 13-15, 11-9, 7-11 after staging a slew of comebacks in a match that lasted more than one and a half hour. mixed doubles Gold medal match scheduled later on Sunday.

Women's hockey team win medal after 16 years

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Skipper Savita Punia led from the front with a spectacular display as the Indian women's hockey team overcame the stopwatch controversy to beat New Zealand 2-1 in shootout and win the Bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games here Sunday. This is the team's first medal at CWG in 16 years. Leading 1-0, India conceded a penalty corner with less than 30 seconds to go for the final hooter, as the match went into shootout after Olivia Merry's equaliser. In the regulation time,

India got the lead through Salima Tete in the 29th minute. Coming off their heart-breaking loss to Australia in a controversial semifinal, India showed the intent to wrap up their campaign with a win and earn a podium finish. The Indians were done in by a horrendous timing faux pas in the shoot-out against Australia. In the shootout on Sunday, India captain and goalkeeper Savita showed her class, pulling off three spectacular saves to give her side its third CWG medal. After Megan Hull put New



Zealand ahead, an agile Savita denied Rose Tynan, Katie Doar and Olivia Shanon, while Sonika and Navneet scored for India to register a famous win. "We knew it wouldn't be easy, so before we came, we worked every minute and every second. I am so proud. We fought as a team," Savita said. On the pressure of being a goalkeeper in the shootout, she said, "The pressure is always there, but all credit goes to my coach (Janneke Schopman) who told me 'you are good, so just believe in yourself and watch the ball'."

Viswanathan Anand becomes FIDE deputy president

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian chess legend Viswanathan Anand was on Sunday elected deputy president of FIDE, the sport's world governing body, while incumbent president Arkady Dvorkovich was re-elected for a second term. Five-time world champion Anand was part of Dvorkovich's team. Dvorkovich received 157 votes as against 16 by his rival Andrii Baryshpolets while the number of invalid votes was 1 and abstentions stood at 5. The elections to the world

chess body were held during the FIDE Congress which is being conducted here alongside the 44th Chess Olympiad. After an illustrious career during which he won numerous titles and honours, the Chennai-based Anand has in recent times cut down on his tournament play and focussed on coaching. He shot to prominence as a teenager and became India's first ever Grandmaster after winning the world junior title and have since led the country at the global level in chess. He also won five world titles with the last being the world rapid title in 2017.

A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND APPROACH WAS REQUIRED AFTER LAST YEARS' T20 WC: ROHIT

PTI ■ LAUDERHILL

A disastrous campaign in the last T20 World Cup has forced the Indian team to bring about a radical change in its attitude and approach, skipper Rohit Sharma has said.

Rohit is now gearing up to lead the Indian side in the upcoming edition of the T20 showpiece in Australia, but before that, they have the Asia Cup to deal with.

Speaking on Star Sports show 'Follow the Blues', Rohit said, "We've made it very clear after the T20 World Cup in Dubai, where we didn't qualify for the finals, that we felt there needed to be a change in our attitude and approach in how we play our game."

India will enter the Asia Cup as defending champions.

With Team India adopting a more aggressive batting style in the past few months, Rohit spoke about how the squad is getting ready for the upcoming challenges.

"If the message is clear from the captain and the coach about where the team is trying to head, then the individuals will definitely try to do that. For that to happen they need freedom and clarity and that's what we are trying to do. We are trying to give them as much freedom as possible."

When asked about his experience of captaining a team with so many young leaders, Rohit said, "I know it's very exciting honestly to create so many leaders around the team because it's always a good sign."

"And you want the guys to handle the pressure, who understand the game and know each other really well. And when they are leading the team, all these things can happen."

India have had six different cap-



'Turned to slower to unsettle WI batters'

PTI ■ LAUDERHILL

India pacer Avesh Khan's redemption, after being whacked around the Caribbean grounds with strong wind and short boundaries, came about after he slowed down his pace following skipper Rohit Sharma's advice.

Khan said he has received "enormous amount of confidence" from Rohit and coach Rahul Dravid when he was struggling to come to grips with the strong wind and short boundaries.

The bowler's match-winning performance (2/17 in 4 overs) helped India seal the T20I series against West Indies with a 59-run victory in the fourth match here on Saturday.

"They have given me an enormous amount of confidence, despite the fact I did not perform well in my last two games."

However, Rohit bhai and Rahul Sir's support have given me the confidence both on and off the field... And told me that rough patches do happen," Khan told reporters after the match.

Khan had leaked 54 runs in six overs on his ODI debut in Port-of-Spain last month. In the ensuing first two T20Is in St Kitts, he continued to bleed runs but Rohit, regardless of his pacer's struggles, had tasked Khan with defending nine off the final over in the second T20.

Khan failed to deliver, but the

team management kept backing him.

"They also backed me by saying that an average performance in two matches do not make anyone a bad bowler, especially in T20s, given how the format is."

"I was backed the same way in this match too and I am happy that I performed well. They provided me necessary support during the South Africa tour as well."

"When a player is constantly encouraged by the captain and coach to perform well, it automatically motivates him to give his best. Rohit bhai is a fantastic leader. Not only me, he always backs and supports everyone in the team," Khan added.

tains in the past eight months owing to a combination of factors.

"I think it's very important to have that leadership, but obviously, you know we play the IPL and it's a 10-team tournament. So there will be 10 captains which at some stage will be a part of the Indian team as well."

"You know, I think it's fantastic because honestly my job is much lesser as these guys understand everything pretty well. So, it's just about if someone's having a thought, how am I going to back up that thought. For me as captain that is my role and that is what I'm trying to do," he said.

Looking ahead, Rohit mentioned that the role of coach Rahul Dravid is vital for the Indian team.

"With Rahul bhai I have played some games with him as he was my first captain when I made my ODI debut. So, obviously we have some kind of understanding. I have spent a lot of time in the NCA when I was injured and he was there."

"We had regular chats happening all the time and he was closely following my game as well," he said.

The 'Hitman' also spoke about the importance of having a coach whose vision and belief aligns with the team.

"When he (Dravid) became a coach here, we met and sat together in a room for a while and decided how we want to take this thing forward and he was pretty much on the same thought process as to what I was thinking."

"That made it a little easier for me to give out a clear message to the boys because we don't want to create confusion among the group; and of course, we wanted him to change the style of cricket as well."

"We wanted to play a certain way in all three formats and he was ready to accept all of that."



Zimbabwe beat B'desh by 5 wickets, seal ODI series

AP ■ HARARE

Zimbabwe trounced Bangladesh by five wickets in the second ODI. With that, the hosts clinched an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Batting first, the Bangla Tigers hoarded 290/9, courtesy of the fifties from Tamim Iqbal (50) and Mahmudullah (84*). Chasing 291, the hosts stumbled at the start, but centuries Sikandar Raza (117*) and Regis Chakabva (102) steered them home (291/5).

Raza has been a man possessed in the limited-over duels played this year. This series has been no different for the all-rounder. In addition to picking three wickets, Raza brought up his fifth ODI ton (10 to seal the series for the hosts. Notably, it's his fifth fifty-plus score in a span of seven innings in ODIs, including a 135* in the last outing.

Chakabva had class written all over him in the pivotal duel. The wicket-keeper batter clobbered a hostile-look-

ing 102 off 75 deliveries, studied with 10 fours and two sixes. It was his maiden ODI ton. He has breached the 1,000-run mark (1,057) while averaging 21.57. He also fetched a colossal 201-run stand alongside Raza to put Zimbabwe back in the chase.

Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal hit half centuries as Bangladesh scored 290-9. Coming in at 127 for three in the 24th over Mahmudullah was unbeaten on 80 at the close of the 50-over innings.

Captain and opener Tamim followed up his half-century in a five-wicket loss on Friday by making 50 before becoming the first Bangladesh batter to fall, with 71 runs on the board.

Mahmudullah scored his runs off 84 balls with his knock including three sixes and three fours at Harare Sports Club.

Tamim, who on Friday became the first Bangladeshi to score 8,000 ODI runs, was equally brisk, reaching his total off 45 deliveries.

World No. 1 Medvedev ends ATP title drought



AP ■ LOS CABOS

World number one Daniil Medvedev won his first ATP title of 2022 on Saturday, roaring past defending champion Cameron Norrie 7-5, 6-0 in the final of the hardcourt tournament in Los Cabos, Mexico.

Medvedev snapped a five-match losing streak in finals — a stretch that included his agonizing five-set loss to Rafael Nadal in the Australian Open final in February.

He also came up short this year in 's-Hertogenbosch and Halle. He didn't get a chance at Wimbledon, where Russian and Belarussian players were banned because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

His first trophy since he won the US Open last year — denying Novak Djokovic a calendar Grand Slam — comes just as he launches the final build-up to his title defense in the final Grand Slam of 2022.

Next he'll defend his Canadian Open title before tackling the Cincinnati Masters.

ROGERS SAN JOSE FINAL

San Jose: Shelby Rogers, ranked 45th in the world, qualified for the WTA hardcourt tournament final in San Jose, California, on Saturday with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over 19th-ranked Veronika Kudermetova.

Rogers reached her first final since 2016 and will be seeking a first WTA Tour title when she takes on No. 12 Daria Kasatkina. Rogers continued an impressive week that included an opening win over former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu and a victory over world number three Maria Sakkari, the top seed.

The 28-year-old hasn't dropped a set all week. Rogers will be playing her first final since Rio de Janeiro in 2016. She was runner up at Bad Gastein in 2014.

KANEPI VS SAMSONOVA

Washington: Estonia's Kaia Kanepi, trying to end a nine-year WTA title drought at age 37, advanced to the Washington Open final on Saturday by defeating Australian Daria Saville 6-3, 6-1.

World number 37 Kanepi will play for the crown against 60th-ranked Liudmila Samsonova, who routed China's Wang Xiyu 6-1, 6-1 in the other semi-final at the ATP and WTA hardcourt event, a US Open tune-up.

Kanepi seeks her fifth career WTA title but her first since the 2013 Brussels Open. She won her only WTA hardcourt title at Brisbane in 2012.

In her first WTA final since a 2021 Australian Open tuneup at Melbourne, Kanepi needed only 73 minutes to dispatch Saville, who was in her first WTA semi-final since 2018 at Acapulco.

"I played my best match," Kanepi said. "Everything was very smooth for me. I hit a lot of lines."

Fraser-Pryce runs world leading 10.66 sec for 100m

AP ■ CHORZOW

Jamaican sprint star Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce ran a world-leading 10.66 seconds to win the women's 100 metres on Saturday at the Silesia Diamond League meeting in Poland.

Crowned 100m world champion for the fifth time last month in Eugene, Oregon, Fraser-Pryce finished ahead of American Aleia Hobbs (10.94) and Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou (11.00) in Chorzow.

"I always come into races expecting to run fast! Last year I set a meeting record here," said Fraser-Pryce.

"Last year I felt a lot of pressure on me and this year I decided to just have fun. It is amazing to be this consistent. I am always excited to compete and see what I can do."

It was her second Diamond

League win of the season over 100m following victory in Paris.

The 35-year-old was 0.06sec off her personal best set last August in Lausanne.

Fraser-Pryce took Gold in 10.67sec at the recent world championships, coming home ahead of Shericka Jackson and Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah in a Jamaican sweep.

With Thompson-Herah bidding for a sprint double at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, world champion Jackson continued her strong season in Poland as she won the 200m in 21.84sec.

World Bronze medallist Trayvon Bromell triumphed in the men's 100m in 9.95sec, ahead of compatriot and silver medallist Marvin Bracy and Jamaica's Ackeem Blake. Reigning Olympic and world champion Emmanuel Korir of Kenya won the 800m.



AP ■ CLERMONT

Lionel Messi scored twice in the second half, including with a stunning overhead kick, as Paris Saint-Germain began their defence of the Ligue 1 title with a 5-0 demolition of Clermont on Saturday.

Neymar was also in outstanding form for a PSG side who did not miss the injured Kylian Mbappe, with the Brazilian opening the scoring in Clermont before setting up Achraf Hakimi and Marquinhos for further goals before half-time.

Messi then exchanged passes with Neymar before sidefooting in the visitors' fourth goal with 10 minutes left. Yet Messi saved the best for last,

Ten Hag loses 1st game as Man Utd manager

AP ■ MANCHESTER



son training last week.

Ronaldo is reportedly seeking an exit from Old Trafford to play CL football this season.

But without the five time Ballon d'Or winner, United had no focal point to their attack as Christian Eriksen started in an unfamiliar role as a false nine.

The outcome could have

been very different had Bruno Fernandes not blazed over a glorious chance on six minutes.

The nadir of a nightmare campaign for United last season as they finished sixth in the Premier League came in a 4-0 defeat to Brighton in May, and the Seagulls quickly settled into their passing rhythm.

Messi, Neymar combine to script PSG's 5-0 win

darting into the box four minutes from the end to control a Leandro Paredes pass on his chest with his back to goal, before converting with an acrobatic overhead kick.

That goal had the crowd at Clermont's Stade Gabriel-Montpied singing the name of the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, who endured a difficult first season in Paris.

PSG's victory in new coach Christophe Galtier's first league game

in charge was achieved despite Mbappe missing the trip due to an adductor injury.

Mbappe also missed last week's 4-0 defeat of Nantes in the season-opening Champions Trophy due to suspension.

Messi had opened the scoring in that game, while Neymar netted a brace. The duo therefore already have six goals between them this season, with PSG looking in ominous form.

Rahul & Virat set to return for Asia Cup T20

The 2022 edition of the Asia Cup T20 tournament will take place in the United Arab Emirates from August 27. The tournament was initially supposed to take place in Sri Lanka, but due to the ongoing political and economic crisis there, it was shifted to the UAE, but Sri Lanka will remain the host. This year, in preparation for the T20 World Cup, which will be held in Australia from October 16 to November 13, the Asia Cup will be played in the T20I format, making the upcoming matches, in which India will face Pakistan at least twice, crucial. Ahead of the team selection in Mumbai on Monday for the multi-nation event, **DRITI ATRI** takes a look at the 15 players who can find a place in the squad.

OPENERS: Even though since the end of last year's T20 World Cup, India have tried as many as eight players as openers, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul are almost certain to be picked. And with Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, and Virat Kohli also capable of batting at the top in case of any mishap, there are almost negligible chances for a reserve opener.

MIDDLE ORDER: Virat Kohli will make his comeback for India in the Asia Cup after taking a break from the West Indies tour. He will bat at his usual number three position, and in the middle, joining him will be Suryakumar Yadav. The Mumbaier has established himself in the white-ball format of the game.

WICKETKEEPER: Even though there are options in the form of Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, and Dinesh Karthik, Rishabh Pant is almost certain to be picked up as India's first choice wicketkeeper-batter. His numbers in white-ball cricket are not as high as they are in Test cricket, but he cannot be dropped.

ALL ROUNDERS: Hardik Pandya and Ravindra Jadeja are two of the best all-rounders in world cricket at the moment, and both of them are almost certain to be picked. Apart from contributing with the bat and ball, both are excellent fielders and now also have the experience of leading an IPL side, which will come in handy as the tournament progresses.



FINISHER: There's no one better than Dinesh Karthik in the world at the moment as a number seven batter. The veteran Indian stumper made a sensational comeback to the Indian shortest format side and is now on his way to the big events.

PACERS: Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah are definite starters, and with Hardik Pandya to support them with the ball in hand now, India is likely to stick with the duo for the Asia Cup.

SPINNER: Even though Yuzvendra Chahal wasn't included in the Indian team for the five T20Is against West Indies, he is still India's first choice white-ball spinner, and despite competition from

Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Axar Patel, and Kuldeep Yadav, he will get the nod.

RESERVES: Since the squad for the Asia Cup is almost likely to be the one that India will field in the T20 World Cup later this year, it becomes interesting to see which other four players get the selectors' nod. Since Harshal Patel is out of the Asia Cup due to an injury, there are question marks over his availability for the T20 World Cup as well. But India have enough options to replace him and the likes of Deepak Chahal, who will return to action for the first time since February 20 against Zimbabwe this month, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh and

Mohammed Shami will be in the fray. As far as a back-up middle order batter is concerned, Shreyas Iyer is likely to get the nod of selectors over Deepak Hooda, who has also impressed in the limited chances he has had so far. And in the back-up spinner category, Axar Patel is likely to pip Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, and Kuldeep.

India's likely squad for the Asia Cup: Rohit Sharma (Captain), KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Dinesh Karthik, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal, Shreyas Iyer, Axar Patel, Deepak Chahal, Arshdeep Singh